



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

(Reference: [RZ3 and RZ4 residential redevelopment policies
in inner north Canberra](#))

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 11 AUGUST 2010

Secretary to the committee:
Mrs N Kosseck (Ph: 6205 0435)

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.

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Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 2.03 pm.

BARR, MR ANDREW, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation and Minister for Gaming and Racing
SAVERY, MR NEIL, Chief Planning Executive, ACT Planning and Land Authority
CALNAN, MR GARRICK, Manager, Development Policy, Planning Services Branch, ACT Planning and Land Authority

THE CHAIR: Welcome, minister, Mr Savery and all the officials. You are obviously aware that this is the planning, public works and territory and municipal services committee inquiry into RZ3 and RZ4 residential redevelopment policies. I am sure that you are all familiar with the privilege card. Could you indicate whether that is the case? That being so, minister, would you like to make some opening remarks?

Mr Barr: No, thank you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: We might throw it straight open to questions. Minister, from your point of view, what do you see as the main drivers for this redevelopment policy?

Mr Barr: Clearly, the territory needs to respond to a number of emerging policy challenges—climate change, the need to have a more economically efficient city and use of existing infrastructure and a requirement for more diverse housing types in locations where there is clearly consumer demand to reside.

There is also a pretty compelling case to locate a greater proportion of our population closer to where our major employment zones are. So, in that context, I think a particularly compelling table contained on page 6 of the government's submission goes to highlight the fact that about 30 per cent of employment in the territory is located in north Canberra, yet only 11.7 per cent of the population resides in that district.

It is fairly clear that the policy changes that have been put in place over the last 10 to 15 years have certainly stimulated some level of redevelopment within the area that the committee is examining and that, by and large, with the odd exception, as is the case in life, that redevelopment has been positive, it has been broadly supported and it has clearly seen a rejuvenation of those areas.

When some of these policy changes were first embarked upon, there were some moratoriums put in place and there was a particular view that it would be appropriate for the Assembly, the committee and the minister of the day at some point in the future to have another look at how development had progressed over that period and what might be appropriate for the next period of development in the city.

In that context, I referred this matter to the committee, with a view that a policy change was inevitable and also desirable. But, having said that, there are obviously a range of trade-offs that the committee needs to examine and that the community needs to debate. There is no perfect answer in planning. There will always be a diversity of views and not everyone will be 100 per cent happy with the outcome in the end. But, in my view, it is the job of the committee, the Assembly and ultimately for me, as minister, to, through this process and this public process, sign off on an outcome that

will, on balance, be a net benefit for the community and will contribute to and be an important contributing factor to a number of other whole-of-government policy challenges, which is the point where I began—climate change and the economic sustainability of Canberra as well.

THE CHAIR: Yesterday, minister, we heard from one witness who said that we are actually achieving more density in the far-flung suburbs than we are in the inner suburbs at the moment, with some of the new developments going on. I cannot quite recall which suburb—

MS LE COUTEUR: Banks, Dunlop.

MR COE: Banks and Conder or something.

MS LE COUTEUR: The Planning Institute had figures of about 30 dwellings per hectare out there versus about 18 in the inner north.

Mr Barr: Yes, which would reflect—

MS LE COUTEUR: Which would seem to be believable.

Mr Barr: Yes, and would reflect historical development patterns. Yes, there is no doubt that, certainly, if you were to exclude those areas within the inner city precincts that have had quite intense—

MS LE COUTEUR: Ainslie was one.

Mr Barr: Yes, quite intense redevelopment—yes, that would be the case. The development philosophy at the time that those suburbs were developed is somewhat different from what is the case now. Clearly, a contributing factor in 2010 as opposed to 1910 is the scarcity of land at this point in time, nearly 100 years on in the development of Canberra. The amount of available land for development is significantly less now than it was 100 years ago.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does the government have a view as to what it would like to see happen in this area?

Mr Barr: We are very interested in hearing from the community and the committee on that matter, Ms Le Couteur. Clearly, successive governments have put in train a variety of policy settings that are leading to different outcomes in those communities. But we see this proposal as a way of contributing to some of those larger policy challenges that the territory faces—namely, a response to climate change, our need to have a more economically sustainable city, to better utilise existing infrastructure and to provide housing choice in areas where people want to live, to respond to changing demographics within our city and changing household structures.

Again, I point to elements of the government's submission. We know the trend in household formation. We know that the traditional model of housing in Canberra, as it was rolled out by the commonwealth in the 60s and 70s is no longer appropriate for the diverse housing needs of Canberra of 2010. So we have a range of policy levers

available to us to attempt to respond to that range of policy challenges. This is one specific proposal in a specific part of the city, but it is not isolated in terms of the overall policy intent and just forms one part of a larger set of policy initiatives that are changing the nature of the city, making it more environmentally and economically sustainable in the long term.

MS LE COUTEUR: You have not got a specific proposal, you said. The government has not got a specific proposal that this is—

Mr Barr: I will get the planning authority to—

MS LE COUTEUR: That is really my question: exactly what do you—

Mr Barr: talk through it. Clearly, what is informing these policy changes, and has indeed informed policy changes over the period of self-government, has been a number of community debates, a number of debates at an individual neighbourhood level. So all of the areas that this inquiry covers have been through the neighbourhood planning process, such as it was in the earlier part of this decade. Each of the suburbs has particular plans, a discussion and a snapshot in time. Those plans made reference to further discussions down the track, and we are having those now. Do you want to add anything, Mr Savery?

Mr Savery: Taking it purely from a planning point of view, so not wishing to infer what the government's position might be, we believe that it is an appropriate time to review the moratorium and, if you like, review the performance of RZ3 and RZ4 in the areas adjacent to it, with a view to uplifting the moratorium.

It has certainly reached a point now where, with respect to the sorts of challenges we are facing as a society and a community in this particular location adjacent to the city centre, high density development is appropriate, and it has been proven to be a successful model. Whilst inevitably we have bad examples of development as well as good examples of development scattered not far from these locations, that is really, I think, a subject for another discussion as opposed to what are the general principles and planning approaches that we want to adopt for this area.

The minister has outlined, I think, all the really important reasons why we are at this point in time, and inevitably there is pressure building, not just here but in other parts of Canberra, for us to look at how we can facilitate good forms of high density development adjacent to our transport corridors, adjacent to where there are employment opportunities, where services are being redefined. I think, in that respect, there is a transition happening, not just in Canberra but in other cities, where service authorities are making fairly significant decisions about where they should be focusing their efforts. If they see that a population is in decline—and that could be through demographic change or for other reasons—then the potential is that they are going to pull services out of that area. I think we have the opportunity to forecast now to many of those service providers, which includes utilities, that in fact we are committed to this corridor. And keep in mind, of course, that the balance of Northbourne Avenue is outside of the RZ3 and RZ4 zones, which is going to, I think, see further intensification of development in the future. The plans essentially allow for that and seek to facilitate that sort of development.

You have a natural progression back from that through the suburbs. It is not dissimilar to some of the work that has been going on in Melbourne and in Sydney, where, again, along the key transport corridors you get the majority of your high density development and then you scale that development back so that you retain your suburban characteristics and qualities further away from those main corridors. But if the question at the end of the day is what is the planning authority's view on this, our view is that it is time to proceed with the balance of development in this area.

MS LE COUTEUR: We have talked a lot about principles and what you would like to see happening, but what about actual changes? I think I have got from you just the rule which talks about the balance. You have to develop all of the southern before the northern. I think you have said you are not in favour of that, and not in favour of that one-block moratorium. But there is nothing else that you have specifically suggested. I am just trying to get an idea of actual changes as distinct from principles that we are thinking about here.

Mr Calnan: We certainly have not got to the point of putting forward policy proposals as part of this exercise. This inquiry resulted from an evaluation of how the RZ3 and RZ4 policies in inner north Canberra have performed. So an exercise was undertaken by the planning authority to just look at how those development policies had worked over time, and we identified some issues. Some of the issues were the ones that Neil mentioned—the issue around the moratorium that exists in a couple of sections, the issue around the staging policy that exists in relation to the land north of Macarthur and Wakefield avenues.

I think the decision to refer it to this committee was to try and get some views from the committee around those issues so that we would have, I guess, a more solid basis on which to take our policy development forward. Is it something that as a community we favour? Are the policies too restrictive? Are they not restrictive enough? There is a question about whether the densities that have been achieved through the redevelopment that has occurred to date are appropriate in this sort of context. What we were hoping to get out of this process was some sort of indication from the committee, and in terms of representing the Assembly and, more broadly, the community, on what the views around those sorts of things are. There is no point in us putting forward a proposal only to find that that is not something that is going to be broadly supported. I think that is what we were trying to achieve.

Mr Barr: Engagement in the policy development process.

MS LE COUTEUR: If the committee had a report which suggested some sort of change, what would be the next part of the process? A territory plan variation? I know there are a lot of other things that ACTPLA is doing. What would happen next, assuming we say something other than there should be no change?

Mr Barr: There are a range of different ways that the government can proceed. If there is a series of firm recommendations from the committee then one part is to immediately provide a technical amendment to the territory plan and put the changes in place. Another would be to refer it back to the committee through a normal draft territory plan variation process. You would have exactly the same issues back before

you again, and that would take six to 12 months longer. But it would be exactly the same issues that you are considering now.

Ultimately, the committee is going to make a recommendation that, one would hope, the government can act on. That would require, I would hope, a unanimous outcome from the committee, or at least a two-thirds majority because no change can be achieved without the agreement of at least two of the three political parties who are represented on this committee. So reflecting a political reality, the desired outcome of the community in terms of the make-up of the Assembly was for there to be a greater level of engagement in these sorts of matters at the policy development stage. So to the extent that this is a slightly different approach, politics has changed. But with that change comes a responsibility for Assembly members and this committee to be involved in the decision-making process somewhat earlier. Rather than just saying “no” at the end means considering all of the issues during the development of policy.

MR COE: Where is the broader vision articulated?

Mr Barr: The Canberra spatial plan.

MR COE: Because the territory plan does—

Mr Barr: And the territory plan.

MR COE: have guidance for specific areas, but yesterday we heard from one of the witnesses that the broader vision about transport corridors, the broader vision about where the actual growth is going to be, is not necessarily clearly articulated.

Mr Barr: The Canberra plan, the spatial plan, the territory plan and the sustainable transport plan give you all of that detail.

MR COE: It is interesting that we had a witness from one institute yesterday saying that they did not think that this vision was clearly articulated.

Mr Savery: Could I make a comment? In some respects it is an iterative process. The Canberra plan, if you like, represents the government’s vision across a range of themes and portfolios. It is not just planning and city development specific; within that is a theme of the future development of the city. What informs that is the Canberra spatial plan and the ACT’s planning strategy, bearing in mind that the planning strategy also incorporates the sustainable transport plan. So it is not just the Canberra spatial plan. Those two documents were adopted and developed in 2004. They are an expression of the government’s strategic vision for the future development of Canberra. That is pretty much wrapped up in broad principles. For instance, the most obvious one is that, by 2032, 50 per cent of development within the ACT will be within 7½ kilometres of the city.

As part of an iterative process we, as a planning authority, over the course of the last six years, have been drilling down to the detail of how you deliver that on the ground. In the course of the six years we have developed Molonglo—“developed” in a planning sense. We have developed East Lake and eastern broadacre. We are drilling down through all of that. You could say that this is a further iteration of that process

as we now go back and review where the key high density corridor opportunities exist. The spatial plan clearly articulates a desire for high density development around group centres and town centres along key transport corridors—of which this is clearly one. It is through that work over time that you gradually start to populate it.

I think most of you would be aware that we are also evaluating the Canberra spatial plan. It is good practice every five or so years to review your key strategic and policy documents. I think what you will see in the next version of the Canberra spatial plan is a greater granularity, a finer level of detail around some of this. In 2004—and it was heavily influenced through a community consultation process—we captured the broad principles. Now we have had five years to start fleshing out those broad principles. This is just part of that exercise.

MR COE: As I said yesterday, I have some sympathy for residents in a single dwelling block that have multi-unit dwellings encroaching on their back fence when there are blocks on Northbourne which are seemingly quite significantly underutilised. I just want to know where is the leadership, where is the direction, when prime blocks like those on Northbourne, or prime blocks that could be developed for 200 or 300 units, could be developed and make a real dent in terms of housing availability as opposed to 100-odd dual occupancies in the inner north.

Mr Barr: To answer the first part of that question, prior to this government's changes to the territory plan through the garden city variation, you could have random multi-unit or dual occupancy development in every single street.

MR COE: Depending on the block size.

Mr Barr: In every single street in the territory. Change was made then to identify areas close to services and close to transport to focus that level of urban redevelopment. Further changes were then made to that particular planning zone in the 2008 evaluation that made some further requirements in terms of the size of blocks, for example, the street frontage in cul-de-sacs, limiting the number of units that could be redeveloped on those sorts of blocks. Changes were made to require each individual dwelling to have its own private open space, its own frontage, so that you could not have units built on top of each other. They had to have—

MR COE: I am aware of the history of—

Mr Barr: That is right, yes. That is one element. You ask about urban redevelopment on Northbourne Avenue over that period. One need only look at a photo of Northbourne Avenue in 2001 and a photo in 2010 to see that there has been redevelopment.

MR COE: I am particularly interested in the future and how some of these underutilised blocks are going to be developed. Surely, the supply of units would be significantly more if those blocks were developed sooner rather than later, rather than having these multi-unit dwellings throughout the suburbs.

Mr Barr: They are being developed, Mr Coe. I note that during the process of redevelopment people have been making statements like you have that are generally

saying there must be more density along this corridor but then specifically opposing and running political campaigns against the particular redevelopments that come up. One in particular is on the corner of Northbourne Avenue and Mouat Street in Lyneham, at the top of Northbourne Avenue. Campaigns have been run against that redevelopment where the City Gateway Motel is at the moment. There were campaigns run against the Space redevelopment on Northbourne Avenue in Turner.

MR COE: There are campaigns running against lots of things that governments do, but at some point you have to show some leadership. When is that coming?

Mr Barr: Indeed. Those developments are going ahead, Mr Coe; those developments are going ahead.

MR COE: Okay. Specifically, what about the Northbourne housing precinct? What is the government, on the whole, doing there?

Mr Barr: That is obviously not a matter that I have portfolio responsibility for—it sits with the minister for housing—but there is a multi-unit redevelopment policy or an asset management policy that the department of housing have in relation to those multi-unit assets that they have within their portfolio. You would be aware that there is a particular proposal for redevelopment of a number of those properties on the edge of the CBD in Braddon. There is a process that is underway within that portfolio around those particular assets. The planning policies have been in place for some time to enable a redevelopment. There is not an issue in relation to the planning policy settings. That is principally the discussion that we are having today and my responsibility as minister relates to that.

MR COE: So you have obviously got a particular interest in bringing more people into the inner north and onto transport corridors. With that in mind, what sort of pressure are you putting on the Heritage Council or Housing ACT or whatever arm of government it is to actually get information about what is happening with the Northbourne housing precinct and when there is going to be some change there?

Mr Barr: Those processes are already underway in relation to Housing ACT. I do not think it is appropriate for the planning minister to be pressuring an independent body as in the Heritage Council to be making decisions one way or the other.

MR COE: Do you not think it is appropriate that the planning minister, who is putting out statements saying that we want more people living in the inner north and on transport corridors, to inquire and find out exactly when it is going to happen? Surely, if you are going to get as many as 500 or 1,000 more dwellings in that part of the transport corridor that would have an impact on the rollout of other plans elsewhere in the inner north.

Mr Barr: That is one of many redevelopment opportunities in this area. We are trying to discuss another today, but you seem not interested in that. We have recently made changes to the territory plan to enable additional development in Braddon. The Dickson group centre master plan has been underway for some time. There has been redevelopment that has occurred in that area as well that is in this transport corridor. That is not to say that those assets that are held by the government in the public

housing stock are the only redevelopment opportunities in this space. In fact, they would not constitute even the majority of the redevelopment opportunities in this space.

I think to focus on them is to miss the point. That is one element of urban redevelopment. For example, some of the surface car parks that the government owns in these precincts are being redeveloped at the moment for more social housing, Mr Coe. I note that is opposed by your political party.

THE CHAIR: We will go to Ms Le Couteur and then I have some questions.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would just like to go back to the conversation we were having earlier. Minister, you mentioned the possibility of an outcome of this being a technical variation of the territory plan. The committee has not discussed it but, speaking for myself, I would have thought that was entirely inappropriate because the consultation that we are having here is not on a defined proposal. Whatever the committee puts forward, we are not technical planners and we are not going to be in the position that we would be putting forward something which was suitable, I would have thought, as a technical variation to the territory plan.

I think that any proposal like that shows the possibility of really not doing meaningful consultation. There is not a defined proposal before the community here. They are not saying yes or no. I guess the moratorium is pretty clear and I think rule 20 or 21, the rule on north and south, is fairly clear, but—

Mr Barr: So you might support that quick process if you make a firm recommendation in that—

MS LE COUTEUR: Anything else would have to be regarded as unclear.

Mr Savery: I think that is the point of distinction. Bear in mind that a technical amendment is a statutory responsibility of the planning authority. We—

MS LE COUTEUR: I know legally you can do it. I am just suggesting that—

Mr Savery: No. I wanted to help you in understanding that we go through a fairly rigorous process of reassuring ourselves that any change made by way of technical amendment is not affecting the policy. If what was proposed was, in effect, a policy change then clearly we have not undertaken the level of consultation that would be expected of us and would be the subject of a territory plan variation. But there could be aspects of what we are discussing here that can be separated out of that broader policy conversation, such as the moratorium, that could be dealt with by way of technical amendment.

We would still have to make those judgements, but first of all we have to get to the point of: what are the things that we are prepared to discuss or change? Do they fall into something that could be considered for technical amendment versus territory plan variation or perhaps some other process that we need to contemplate?

MS LE COUTEUR: I also make the comment in that context that we are not really,

unfortunately, having a conversation about the whole densification and redevelopment of Canberra. The terms of reference for this are on a particular part of Canberra. While I would have personally liked to have seen this as a broader conversation in terms of what ACTPLA and the government do with it in the future, it is not a whole-of-Canberra conversation, unfortunately.

Mr Savery: You are going to have that opportunity very soon through the process of the evaluation of the Canberra spatial plan and other inputs into the broader planning and development of Canberra, which is not just within the remit of the planning authority or the Minister for Planning. That exercise has been largely occurring for the last 12 months through sustainable future and we are building up to a very focused discussion around these broader issues. This has an element of technicality to it.

Mr Barr: But one would sense, Ms Le Couteur, that there is a desire, an urgent desire, amongst the legislative body to act quickly on matters of climate change and to be setting quite ambitious targets. Targets are one thing and on one level they are absolutely meaningless if they are not backed by actions, Ms Le Couteur. We have had a lot of debate about the need for action. So in the context of considering—

MR COE: Real action even.

Mr Barr: Any sort of action, Mr Coe—any sort of action. You can stand up now, if you want. There is, though, ultimately going to be a need for some decisive action, dare I say it, and that will mean actually having to move on some of these things. It is one thing to be making bold statements about targets and where we need to be by 2020. It is another thing to actually make the decisions to get us there by 2020.

MR COE: What contribution will this variation actually make towards those targets?

Mr Barr: We need to quantify that through the—

MR COE: Has that been quantified?

Mr Barr: Not at this stage, no, because the decisions—

MS LE COUTEUR: There is no proposal. That is the problem.

Mr Barr: There are no proposals yet. Nonetheless, I do not think there is any disagreement that this will make a contribution in a number of areas.

MS LE COUTEUR: Well, actually, no, I think—

Mr Barr: I am happy to hear arguments otherwise, Mr Coe, if you have got some.

THE CHAIR: I do not want to—

Mr Barr: I do not think you do, though.

THE CHAIR: Minister, whilst I believe that this is a very interesting conversation, and I agree with you that it would make a significant difference towards achieving our

targets, because we know that the built environment and transport are the greatest—

Mr Barr: All contribute, yes.

THE CHAIR: producers of greenhouse gases, we can take it as read that it would make a difference but I think we need to not get diverted at this stage into that conversation.

Mr Barr: The questions are leading to these diversions.

THE CHAIR: I want to talk about one other thing that was raised yesterday by a witness. I guess it is part of this conversation but it is not necessarily something that the planning committee can have a great influence on. It is more about the design of the redevelopments when they actually happen. In answer to another question you talked about the changes in our lifestyle choices and also in the types of households that we now have and the need for different kinds of accommodation to meet those different kinds of households and changing lifestyles.

There was concern from some witnesses yesterday about the type of accommodation that they envisaged might occur with some changes that might happen and the social mix and the possibility of a more transient population, particularly in smaller units. They were concerned about the number of units that they saw already popping up around the place in other developments in the inner city which are only one bedroom. They felt that these were more likely to be places where more transient populations—such as students, one imagines—would live. They have a fear that their community as such that they are now experiencing would break down and they would not have their “community” anymore. So I just wanted to pass on that concern.

Mr Barr: Sure. It is a very interesting view and it certainly reflects a particular era of social development in Canberra and Australia. There are a number of observations that I could make. I will make some of them and I will keep some of them to myself, I think.

THE CHAIR: Before you go on, I can imagine that there are lots of things that spring to mind. But there was also a suggestion made by one group of witnesses yesterday—was it the architects?—who suggested that the government could think of setting up a design review body to achieve—

MS LE COUTEUR: It was the planners.

THE CHAIR: The planners—to achieve better design outcomes in multi-unit developments.

Mr Barr: So a committee of good taste.

THE CHAIR: That is the one.

Mr Barr: Yes, okay.

THE CHAIR: I thought I would let you know about that, too, and that might inform

some of your comments now.

Mr Barr: That goes to, I suppose, the highly subjective nature of these issues. What is an attractive development in the eyes of some is the ugliest thing ever to be built in the history of man to others.

To answer the initial part of your question, I think it is worth drawing to the committee's attention the projection on household types—the household structure on page 11 of the government's submission. It shows that over the next 15 years one would anticipate a significant increase in the number of single-person households and the number of two-person households. So the housing stock is going to have to change. The market will demand that change and there will be a reduction in the number of traditional family households in this city.

That will inevitably lead to a change in the nature, and if you are at all interested in allocative efficiency within the housing stock—trying to get a better alignment between the size of houses and the number of people living in them—we seem to have a quite perverse situation at the moment where the number of people per household continues to shrink and yet the size of houses is going in the opposite direction, which has interesting implications for affordability and sustainability in the longer term. I will just raise that as an issue and leave it as a thought for the committee to consider.

In terms of this broader issue around design, as I say, it is a highly subjective area. There are those even within the profession who disagree, often violently, about what is a high-quality development and what is not. So there is no easy answer to that, and whilst it is tempting to think that establishing a committee of good taste, or something that has the same impact but under a different title but is essentially that—a group of professionals who will tell everyone else what is a good design and what is not—I am not sure that you will ever get an answer, or certainly you will not get an answer that will please everyone because these are matters that are highly individual.

There are some redevelopments that I look at and think, “I cannot believe that anyone would live in that or think that that is attractive.” People do. People choose that. People have designed that. One of the joys of being human, Madam Chair, is that we have different views.

Mr Savery: If I could make a couple of follow-up remarks, I think it is important to draw out of the minister's observations the role of the marketplace. This is quite pertinent to the extent to which, by way of planning regulation or any other form of control that the government might have, it can and should intervene in the marketplace. Certainly, we do not have planning laws and planning rules that say, “You must build only one-bedroom or two-bedroom or three-bedroom apartments in particular locations.” We certainly have policies that advocate a mix of residential types. But at the end of the day the market obviously has to make judgements about where it can make a return for itself and where the demands are for different types of housing.

By the same token, we cannot regulate for taste. It is impossible for a planning scheme or any other kind of instrument to try and regulate what the design of a particular place should be. What we tend to do is write broad principles of good

designs. So we do not prescribe an aesthetic but if, for instance, you have a building frontage of 100 metres, it is generally not good design practice just to have a wall that spans that 100 metres. You try and break it up and create some architectural relief. Again, you are not prescribing what the architectural relief is. You are saying that there is a principle here that we would all accept is a reasonable design principle.

It allows the designers in the marketplace to come back. There are any number of combinations of the way they can come back and design something. It is very difficult also to have one designer arbitrating over the design of another. It is like putting two lawyers in a room and asking them a question. They will give you two different answers.

Mr Barr: Two economists; two politicians even.

Mr Savery: We have a major projects review group. Certainly, we have designers on that, we have architects, we have urban designers, we have landscape architects; and they provide their comments. Often it comes at great offence to the people who have submitted their application. “How dare you question my design?” At the end of the day, if push comes to shove, we cannot actually enforce it because there is no regulation that says, “You will design according to my opinion of what is good design.”

It is a very difficult area in which to operate. I will end with an example which is quite relevant to the whole topic of high density development, and that is Sky Plaza. I have openly admitted in other forums that I think the design of Sky Plaza was a mistake, but it is a mistake of the planning authority, not a mistake of the developer, because that design that you see there today is largely the outcome of where we drove them. Again, we could not force them to do it, but we said, “This is the design outcome we think is appropriate for that location.” I look at the original plans they submitted and I think it was, personally, a much nicer architectural form than the one we have got there today.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Coe or Ms Le Couteur?

MR COE: On section 47 in Turner, what communication has the government or ACTPLA in particular had with those residents?

Mr Barr: I know there have been some representations on both sides of the argument there. I have received letters from property owners arguing for a change and against the change. I am not sure whether there has been—

MR COE: What about outward direct communication with them? In the past has it been door knocked, has it been letterboxed?

Mr Savery: I cannot say with any high degree of certainty. At the time that the original master planning was done for that area—and, of course, what we are talking about is going over the legacy of some of that—there would have been a consultative process. I doubt that it included door knocking. Since then, in terms of where we are at now, it has been by correspondence, and largely initiated by them and then us responding.

Mr Barr: Plus, obviously, an invitation to be part of this process, this being a formal process, and then obviously any subsequent processes that come out of that.

Mr Savery: We would have to go back and see, if you want absolute detail.

Mr Barr: Certainly, in the context of 2003, there was alternative 2 in 2001. There is a document on the ACTPLA website that would go to the consultations that occurred at that time.

MR COE: If you could take on notice what communication there has been, since 2003 in particular but perhaps in the years before that as well, that would be interesting.

THE CHAIR: Ms Le Couteur ?

MS LE COUTEUR: At the bottom of page 14 of your submission there is a section on the environmental benefits of consolidation. I know we have some different opinions about how much we want to talk about climate change et cetera, but the bottom line from this is that it is not totally clear—that consolidation can be good or bad, basically, from an environmental point of view. That is how I would read that.

Mr Barr: Yes, it would depend on the nature of the redevelopment.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that, and given your earlier statements that environmental and climate change considerations were driving this, what would you envisage being done to ensure that whatever happened did lead to Canberra being more sustainable? In the submission it says that households in inner city apartments have the highest level of embodied emissions in vehicles and the highest per capita emissions from electricity and gas.

Mr Barr: There are obviously a number of other city-wide or territory-wide policy options that are currently before the community in relation to solar orientation, for example. The mandatory energy requirements through the building code of Australia have progressed significantly since this submission was developed. Again, I point to that particularly significant disparity on page 6 in terms of where employment is located versus where people live. In the context of north Canberra, there is a compelling argument, given that nearly a third of all employment in the city is in this area, that your capacity to have people walking, cycling or utilising public transport to get to work is significant. Out of all the places in Canberra, this is the one where I think you can make the most difference and where—

MS LE COUTEUR: I certainly think that, for north Canberra, the transport argument is pretty compelling.

Mr Barr: Very compelling, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: The dwelling argument is harder.

Mr Barr: Sure. The other observation I make is that we know from practical

experience and objective assessment through the census and otherwise that the percentage of people who now walk or cycle to work who live in Turner or Braddon between—

MS LE COUTEUR: Heaps.

Mr Barr: Yes. It went from six or seven per cent to 40 per cent over the course of a decade with the existing policy. So to take that further would see that significant shift continue. But, yes, the built form is indeed the issue. There are clearly a number of factors, as I indicated—the building code, energy efficiency requirements, water sensitive urban design changes that have occurred. Clearly, there is the issue of more use of renewable energy in terms of powering. The opportunity for that redevelopment to also be linked in to accessing the feed-in tariff and other incentives to enable greater use of renewables will see a more sustainable outcome, combined with the policy changes that are outlined in some of the other draft variations that, as I say, are currently on public exhibition. There are a variety of factors that mean that urban redevelopment that will occur in the ACT over the next decade will be considerably more sustainable than perhaps what occurred from 1995, certainly until the earlier part of this decade.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have any knowledge as to the sweet spots in terms of density or number of storeys—those issues of the built form which will influence energy use and water use?

Mr Savery: Yes, we do. There has been quite a bit of research on this, both for ourselves and nationally. I think it is fair to say that, whilst it is not being agreed to, because there are different bodies doing the research and different academics involved, absolute high rise development does not necessarily work from an energy consumption point of view because of your common areas, the significant embedded infrastructure that is required and the carbon that goes into that in terms of your footings et cetera. Somewhere around six to 10 storeys would appear to be a bit of a magic number that produces good energy efficiency, it has good social aspects and for the person in the street it has a human scale to it. It is not intimidating to the extent of high rise development.

Whilst I know people are always fearful when you use the central areas of European cities as examples, there tends to be a human scale associated with those. When we met with Hans Monninghoff from Hannover last year, talking about the development of Kronsberg, which is notionally a world's best practice development in their city, they have a rule of thumb that development is between six and eight storeys. In fact, his rule of thumb is what people are prepared to walk on a staircase as opposed to using a lift—generally between six and eight storeys.

We have all got different methodologies by which we are looking at these things, but it seems to be coming in at around six to 10. We have done some work, as I said, for the purposes of the evaluation of the Canberra spatial plan. We are calling it the urban form analysis. We are doing some detailed examination of population density, energy use, water use. I think we have samples for Gungahlin, Reid and two others. We have got four; Weston is another one. So we are doing an analysis of their energy based on the urban form and the type of buildings, the density, energy use and water use, and

then we are comparing that with Hannover, Kronsberg, Freiburg, Vauban and Vancouver—Dockside Green.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would it be possible to share those with the committee? They would certainly be very—

Mr Savery: That information has not yet gone to cabinet and it is part of our process of the broader engagement in the evaluation of the Canberra spatial plan, so it will become public information.

Mr Barr: I am reading it now. It is very interesting.

MS LE COUTEUR: I look forward to reading it. We have talked about going up, but what about going across in terms of what proportion of the space would be buildings and what would be open space in terms of your ideal—

Mr Savery: Yes, that is part of the analysis. Obviously, when you go to higher density development, you are looking for the effective location and accessibility to public open space. Again, the move is away from pocket parks that tend not to be well utilised and are not well surveilled. So it is about creating an urban form that basically wraps around your open space that is easy to access but also provides the passive surveillance that gives a level of security to that space. There has to be an acknowledgement that, of course, you do not have your own private open space in those circumstances.

Canberra, unlike other cities that I have just given examples of, has an elaborate open space network around its nature reserves. So how do you build the connectivity to those and how can you use that as a way of building newer biodiversity connectivity corridors as well so that they can function for more than one purpose? It becomes quite an elaborate exercise in how you try to design it, but there is, again, a formula or a comparison. There is no question that Canberra, if anything, is oversupplied in public open space compared to other cities. The amount of public open space we have per resident is quite substantial. In some respects, as you reduce the amount of private open space, there is an argument to retain some of that.

THE CHAIR: In one of the submissions the attention of members was drawn to the fact that in the inner north precinct code, minister, there is a deep root zone which is on the back fence to protect trees, which prevents a certain amount of north facing and forces some developments into an east-west alignment. Can you make any comment on that?

Mr Barr: I might take some assistance from officials on that.

Mr Savery: Yes, that is an important issue.

Mr Calnan: It is a feature of the inner north precinct code. The inner north precinct code essentially results from the work that was done on the section master plans, which involved significant consultation with all of the stakeholders within those areas. One of the key issues that people raise was the landscape character of these inner areas. Often, this character of having mature trees at the rear of the block gave a

landscape backdrop to the development. There was concern around some redevelopments that occurred, particularly where people were building basements for car parking purposes which prevented space from being available for the retention and planting of trees of a significant size, particularly at the rear of the blocks. In response to that, policies around protecting these deep root planting zones were developed and were features of the section master plans originally and they have been incorporated into the inner north precinct code as a result.

Mr Savery: We would expect that to be retained, just as variation 200, known as the garden city variation, was trying to get a balance between increased density while preserving the quintessential characteristics of the landscape of central Canberra.

Mr Barr: It is all a series of trade-offs; it always is.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Obviously, there are design issues with that and also solar access issues.

Mr Barr: Trees or sun—it is common.

Mr Savery: Garrick might correct me. At the time that those section master plans were done, did we have the tree act?

Mr Calnan: I do not think so.

Mr Savery: I do not think we did. With the tree act, of course, we have an additional level of protection on the basis that most of the trees that exist would be regulated trees, at a minimum. Through the design process, we would seek to minimise the intrusion into those root zones.

Mr Calnan: It was not just about protecting trees; it was also about providing the capacity to plant trees. That potentially raises issues with solar access. We have discussed that in other venues.

MR COE: I have a couple of quick questions. Firstly, with regard to the section 47 communication, could you also add to that section 63 and—

Mr Savery: Yes.

MR COE: all the areas affected by the moratoria. With regard to the demographic change that will inevitably come with densification, what other provision is being planned for childcare facilities, health facilities or whatever might be required for new residents?

Mr Savery: I might have mentioned in another forum that there is a chief executives strategic planning group, so all of the government agencies are involved in that. Its main purpose is to ensure that those agencies that are not necessarily at the forefront of doing the forward planning for the development of the city nonetheless get the opportunity to understand where development is likely to happen, when it is likely to happen and, therefore, what the implications are for the provision of their services, be it education, health, childcare, aged-care accommodation and those sorts of things.

Through that process, and particularly at the moment, because we are gearing up for the evaluation of the Canberra spatial plan, those agencies are all starting to review their service provision for the locations now. They are already planning for Gungahlin. They are starting their planning for Molonglo. But now, as we start to talk more about what is likely to happen, say, over the next 30 to 40 years in terms of urban infill development, and not just in this location but in other locations within Canberra, what are the implications for service provisions in those areas? I have not got an answer for you in the sense of where it is all going to happen, but my answer is that they are starting to do that work for the purposes of their future service provision.

MR COE: Is that part of a formal interdepartmental committee? What is the actual body?

Mr Savery: It is an administrative committee.

Mr Barr: It is the chief executives of each of the agencies.

MR COE: An administrative committee within CMD?

Mr Savery: It is chaired by the Chief Minister's Department, yes.

MR COE: Does it actually have a formal name?

Mr Savery: Yes, the Chief Executives Strategic Planning Committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, Mr Savery and officials for your time at this hearing this afternoon. We will send you a copy of the transcript, as usual. If there are any errors, could you let us know.

Mr Barr: Good luck in your deliberations. I look forward to your report.

THE CHAIR: If there are any other questions, we will get them to you. Thank you very much.

BYLES, MR GARY, Chief Executive, Department of Territory and Municipal Services

CORRIGAN, MR JIM, Acting Director, Asset Acceptance, Land Management and Planning Division, Department of Territory and Municipal Services

GILL, MR TONY, Director, Roads ACT, Transport and Infrastructure Division, Department of Territory and Municipal Services

STEWART, MS FAY, Executive Director, Land Management and Planning Division, Department of Territory and Municipal Services

ZATSCHLER, MR GERHARD, Manager, Heritage, Culture and Communications Division, Chief Minister's Department

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Welcome to this public hearing of the planning, public works and territory and municipal services committee on RZ3 and RZ4 residential redevelopment policies. Welcome to you, Mr Byles, and the officials. We have apologies from the minister. You are all familiar with the privilege card. Will you just indicate that you are?

Mr Byles: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr Byles, would you like to make some opening remarks before we go to questions?

Mr Byles: Thank you, Madam Chair; only to say that I am joined here by my officials—Fay Stewart, who is the Executive Director, Land Management and Planning, Mr Tony Gill, the Director of Roads ACT, Mr Jim Corrigan from Asset Acceptance and, of course, Mr Gerhard Zatschler, who has the heritage responsibilities but reports to the Chief Minister's Department.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will commence questions. Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. Yesterday we heard that there had been a reference to the heritage unit for 15 years or so for some of the buildings along Northbourne Avenue, specifically those owned by the housing trust. Given that they are important buildings in the area that we are looking at, do you have any idea how this reference can be resolved?

Mr Zatschler: I understand that the buildings you are talking about are the Turner and Braddon flats?

THE CHAIR: Northbourne Flats.

MS LE COUTEUR: Northbourne Flats—further up, even.

Mr Zatschler: The Northbourne Flats in Turner and Braddon are the ones we are talking about, aren't we? Or are they in Lyneham and Dickson?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I think they go all the way up. You would know better than me exactly where the heritage listings are, but I thought it went further up into the Dickson area and that some of those flats were also proposed for listing.

Mr Zatschler: They have been nominated to the heritage register. I think they are actually excluded from the development.

THE CHAIR: Just to clarify, Mr Zatschler, people are saying that until the actual decision is made as to whether they are going to be heritage listed or not, other kinds of development around it and recommendations such as those that might come from this committee—that the listing may have some bearing on that. So they are anxious to know the timing of when a decision might be made.

Mr Zatschler: I have recently been working with the Housing people. They are in the process of assessing a tender to engage a consultant who will be doing the comparative assessment of a number of housing properties that have been nominated to the ACT register. That process has just started, in terms of the tender evaluation. But once that report has been finalised, that will be forwarded to the Heritage Council for consideration in the context of assessing those nominations. In terms of the impact of proposed development, because the areas we are talking about are adjacent to places that have been nominated to the register, including places that are on the register, such as Haig Park, any sort of development proposals would be referred to the Heritage Council for consideration and they would take those values into account at that time. So it would not impact as such.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have any idea when that process is likely to come to a conclusion? You talked about engaging consultants, but what sort of time span are we talking about here?

Mr Zatschler: My understanding is that tenders have closed and it is being evaluated. I understand that a recommendation has been prepared to select a consultant for endorsement by the delegate, but I do not think that has been completed. My understanding is that Housing are looking at completing that exercise by the end of the financial year, but I cannot guarantee that.

MS LE COUTEUR: The end of this financial year?

Mr Zatschler: This financial year.

MS LE COUTEUR: If that happened, how long would it then be before you had a determination of the status?

Mr Zatschler: I could not put an exact time line on that, but once we get the report, we would refer that to the council task force for consideration, and they would then make some recommendations to council.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are we talking about a couple of years?

Mr Zatschler: Some of these nominations have been in the system for a while. What the council are doing is looking at fast tracking some of those decisions. I cannot put a time line on it because there is an order of priority that they are working through. Until we receive the report from Housing, it is difficult to put a time line on it. I would imagine that that will happen sooner rather than later. If we receive the report in January, I would expect a decision to be made by June. There are a number of

properties that we are looking at. It is not just the Northbourne units; there are other Housing properties that are being assessed.

MR COE: In the event that the council does decide to heritage list it, what does that actually mean in terms of the site and the preservation or conservation of it?

Mr Zatschler: It is difficult for me to answer that because it would be determined by what was being listed. There would be a number of options that council could consider. It could be total preservation, it could be keeping a representative sample, it could be looking at a design that is sympathetic to what is there already. There would be a number of options in relation to the development of those units. In terms of the impact on development on the other side of the road or the precincts that you are looking at, it would be a minimal impact.

MR COE: With respect to the scope of the contract that is going out to tender, or the tender that has just closed, is that just a standard assessment, did it have particularly unique aspects to it or is it pretty much just the usual people on the panel that go for it?

Mr Zatschler: I am not aware of the exact details on that.

MR COE: Has this sort of work been done before on these particular locations, these particular sites? Do you know whether five, 10 or 15 years ago they did similar heritage assessments?

Mr Zatschler: I am unaware of that.

MR COE: What interaction do you have with the planning authority about sites such as this with regard to a master plan in the area or even the Canberra plan or territory plan?

Mr Zatschler: In relation to that, copies of what is proposed are forwarded to us in terms of environmental impact statements and that sort of stuff. We would provide advice in relation to the heritage values in the precinct, if there are any. That is just a standard process.

MR COE: Do you engage on a regular basis in some sort of working group or some sort of interdepartmental committee where you discuss the future of such blocks and the potential of such locations?

Mr Zatschler: Most of the work would be done by the planning authority but we would be called to comment on that. Periodically we meet, but it is not a regular thing.

MR COE: Has the planning authority sought your view as to when a decision might be made about these particular locations and when it could be redeveloped?

Mr Zatschler: This is in relation to the units along Northbourne Avenue?

MR COE: Yes, the housing precinct.

Mr Zatschler: No, they have not.

THE CHAIR: I have a question around roads. There has been some concern raised in submissions by some residents with regard to the possibility of any redevelopment of some of these areas where they perceive the roads are quite narrow. They are concerned about any additional traffic, particularly parking, that might occur on roads because some of the units might have less parking available to them—say, visitors might park on the road or if they have more than one car they might park their car on the road. So they are concerned about traffic management in that area but also dropping off and picking up children from the school that is in that area in Turner. Is there any scope to manage that situation?

Mr Gill: Associated with any development application, there is a traffic impact assessment or an impact assessment of a particular development in the context of traffic and/or parking issues. The scale of that development and the impact it has on the local area would be a consideration. ACTPLA would refer that to TAMS as a referral agency and we would provide comment and, indeed, offer some suggestions on conditions that should be included as part of any development. That is not limited to this particular rezoning; for any development application across the territory, that process would take place. That is coordinated within the department by my colleague Mr Corrigan.

THE CHAIR: So that would be on a case-by-case, basis, would it not?

Mr Gill: On a case-by-case basis, but we would be aware of the overall direction of the development in a particular area—say, in the inner north—through our discussions with the planning authority over time. We would be involved in working groups and we have regular liaison with the authority. We would not be surprised by particular applications because the detail that goes with the individual development application would be relevant at the time. It can take some time for a development to actually get up and go.

THE CHAIR: But, for us, we have to consider what the impact might be before the applications come in.

Mr Gill: There is a general understanding of the impact. ACTPLA have done, over the last 10 or 15 years, a number of studies looking at the capacity of, in this particular area, the existing infrastructure, parking and traffic requirements, which we are aware of. When we see the individual development application, we look at that and basically see what the actual impact is. So there is an understanding.

THE CHAIR: We just talked to the minister about something which you may also be able to throw some light on with respect to the deep root zone, which is part of the inner north precinct code. It talks about the fact that you have to leave a good space along the back fence line for trees, for the large deep-rooted trees, so that people can maintain those in their backyards. We know there is a tree policy—the code for trees, which would override that particular policy. It was written some time ago, or there was work in conjunction with that. What about the services that often run at the back of those? With respect to those two policies, one to enable people to plant deep-rooted trees in those positions and in fact keep them, and the other in that you often run

services along the back fences of blocks, how do those two things work, particularly in relation to increased density and perhaps increased services?

Mr Byles: Perhaps Mr Corrigan could lead off on this response.

Mr Corrigan: There are a number of issues you have raised there. At the back of the block obviously trees can be provided—so large trees to keep that character of the inner north of Canberra. The idea of the planning policies is to limit development into the rear zones of the properties. The development is towards the front. That is the intention, and it is a good one. With the Tree Protection Act that you refer to, obviously any trees that would be regulated under that act, caught by the criteria of that act, would be considered and assessed as per normal.

The policies apply in terms of new plantings as well. The easements of blocks are generally along the very back of the block. The easement may only be one to 1½ metres wide from the fence line. The developers know not to plant the trees over the top of easements and things because obviously it is a risk to the development. In the development application referral process that Mr Gill referred to earlier, they are all referred to TAMS under the requirements of the planning act. We would look at those things. It would be picked up—as the planning authority would. When someone has a landscape plan, we would clearly know that there is a stormwater easement or a sewerage easement at the back of the block. If someone is putting a forest of trees over it, we would be picking that up. That is how it is managed. It is pretty unlikely. Occasionally people do plant things, being unaware, and that has implications as well. Does that assist you?

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is fine. Thank you. Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: Obviously one of the reasons that people are interested in redeveloping the inner north is from a transport point of view. There are bus stops going down Northbourne Avenue and there are even some bus stops within the suburban areas next to it, but what level of commitment does the government have to the location of stops? I have heard the suggestion that particularly down Northbourne Avenue it will become much more concentrated on high frequency, and the high frequency will be accompanied by fewer stops. There comes a point at which people, particularly if they are one or two houses back from Northbourne Avenue, will stop walking. In terms of where the bus stops are going to be and the frequency of the service—as well as the things which for the people who are not immediately in Turner but a bit further out in the area would make the Northbourne Avenue precinct attractive from a transport point of view—what commitment do we have?

Mr Byles: Ms Le Couteur, the commitment—certainly by the department and I would suggest by the government—is to continue to provide the best service possible, in terms of transport, as part of our sustainable transport plan. I have not heard the story that you have about reducing the number of bus stops, but I will take that on notice. Perhaps you can advise me where that came from. I am happy to source information about that. I have not heard that.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is just for the very high frequency, as you have done with the 727, which does not stop at all stops.

Mr Byles: Yes, limited stops.

MS LE COUTEUR: The high frequency will become limited stops. If you are near one of the other bus stops, the frequency could well go down.

Mr Byles: So is your concern the—

MS LE COUTEUR: People are planning to build large buildings which are going to be around for a long time. One of the reasons they do that and then decide to live there is on the basis that there is going to be a bus stop which will be stable and there will be a defined or better level of service. I am aware of some people in Belconnen—friends of friends—who moved into units only to find the bus service gave up about a month later. The fact that the express routes stopped there was one of their major reasons for moving. What level of commitment is there to bus services or light rail, given this is a major consideration for the people who live further away from town?

Mr Byles: In terms of commitment for buses and bus stop locations, it is getting the balance between the amount of stops and the time a service takes, as you would appreciate.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Byles: It is also the department's commitment and the government's commitment to increase the modal shift so people use public transport more than they currently are. We are certainly committed to pursuing that endeavour. That will continue in its current guise. As to the location of bus stops, perhaps Mr Gill has a comment that he wants to add in terms of the express services. I would expect that the agencies would collaborate in terms of the developments, particularly if we are talking about urban infill, as to where the bus stops might be located for optimal passenger collection.

It is a process of the agencies talking to ensure that we put bus stops where they are most likely to be used. We do that now. I would also add that our networks are modified frequently. At this stage we are looking at network 10 to be developed later on this year. We take every opportunity to look at where the passenger demand is and modify our services to fit that demand. Mr Gill might like to comment.

Mr Gill: On a route like Northbourne Avenue, which is a public transport spine and notionally will benefit by higher density in that area in terms of patronage, the actual location of bus stops will remain similar to what currently exists. But in terms of the higher frequency services, they will not stop at every service. With the next level down, there will be a frequent network and they will stop at every stop. In the context of the Northbourne Avenue corridor, people will have a choice of using either the higher frequency services or the frequent services, but they will be able to use the same bus stops. There are no proposals to reduce the number of bus stops on a route like Northbourne Avenue.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, but some of them will not be part of the express services.

Mr Gill: Some of them will not be part of the higher frequency services, but they will

all be part of the frequent services.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is there a commitment at this stage as to which ones will be part of the express services? Will they be the current 727 stops?

Mr Gill: As you are aware, that public transport strategy is being developed as we talk. We cannot roll out the detail here; it is being developed as we talk. It is being developed.

THE CHAIR: Mr Byles, members do not have any more heritage questions, so we could let Mr Zatschler go now. I am sure he has got a lot of work to do and would appreciate an early mark, if that is all right with you?

Mr Byles: Absolutely, Ms Porter. Bearing in mind he belongs to the Chief Minister's Department, I am more than happy to let Mr Zatschler go. He did belong to TAMS at one stage.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Thank you very much for appearing before us. We will get a copy of the transcript to you, Mr Zatschler.

Mr Zatschler: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe?

MR COE: Regarding infrastructure in the inner north, especially the below-ground infrastructure, whether it be stormwater or sewerage—whatever the case may be—how confident are you that you are fully aware of all the infrastructure there is there? I know that the NCDC switched across, there was the Department of the Interior and 20 years of self-government and occasionally you have come across the odd surprise. I understand you might have come across a surprise at the Belconnen interchange as well in terms of some pipes that were not known about. How confident are you about infrastructure that is available in the inner north and the actual state of it?

Mr Byles: Are you specifically referring to the inner north or more broadly?

MR COE: The inner north in particular, as it is relevant to this inquiry.

Mr Byles: Again, I will ask Mr Gill, who is very involved in this particular aspect, to respond.

Mr Gill: There are two levels. In terms of the territory as a whole, we maintain an asset management plan. As part of that asset management plan there is an inventory of the existing infrastructure. That obviously applies to the inner north as well. We update that on an annual basis and we collect information in terms of the condition or use of that.

To respond to your specific question about the inner north, we have a good understanding of the infrastructure that we are responsible for. That does not mean it is 100 per cent, but we have got a good understanding. Through our ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the network we get a better understanding. The

inventory is always being updated and modified, but we do have a good understanding. The asset management plan that we are currently revising at the moment draws on that information in terms of updating that information.

MR COE: In terms of the relatively significant development that is proposed for the inner north over the next 10 or 20 years, how confident are you that the below-ground infrastructure will be able to handle that increase?

Mr Gill: The infrastructure that exists in the inner north at the moment meets the current requirements. With further development that will need to be supplemented in some specific locations. I think there is an acknowledgement of that in a report that you have on your table. The institute of engineers' report card on the ACT flags that in terms of stormwater infrastructure. I think it rates stormwater infrastructure at C-plus, which says that it is in good condition but it will need to be supplemented to meet future needs. We acknowledge that.

MR COE: At what point do you work out when you need to upgrade it? For instance, if we get an extra 5,000 dwellings, do you do it at that point or do you do it at 10,000? How do you actually determine when you have tipped over the edge? I guess, to an extent, when it is too late it is too late.

Mr Gill: You would be aware of the capital works process and the fact that there are some annual programs within that in terms of capital upgrades. The purpose of capital upgrade programs is to augment existing infrastructure, as opposed to building new infrastructure. Stormwater is a feature of that capital upgrade program. It is part of our ongoing process in terms of monitoring and managing the network and also our understanding of what planning proposals are coming on stream. We program the work on that basis. Normally in the case of major infrastructure we would do some feasibility design initially and then have that ready to get included onto the program when required. Sometimes it takes a while. We have a process that tries to match demand with supplied infrastructure.

MR COE: At the current or the projected rate of growth of dwellings and population you are confident that the current capital works budgets will accommodate the required improvements?

Mr Gill: In some cases that might need to be supplemented by specific projects, but generally we believe that the current arrangements in place will address the development in the inner north.

MR COE: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: And that goes for electricity? Is the electricity infrastructure also likely to require—

Mr Gill: That comes outside our areas of responsibility, so it would not be reasonable for me to comment on that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay. I was just thinking about infrastructure.

MR COE: The published asset management plan expired some time ago, did it not?

Mr Gill: It is currently being reviewed at the moment. As it relates to road infrastructure, our asset management plan is being reviewed by a company called Opus International, and that will be finalised in the next month or so. They have been working on it for the last 12 months.

MR COE: Does the Roads ACT asset management plan include—

Mr Gill: That includes stormwater infrastructure, roads—all the road infrastructure that comes within the responsibility of TAMS is covered in that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Ms Porter earlier talked about individual road impacts—that, if there was a change, the immediate road around it would be influenced. You said you are planning for all of that. I am wondering how you are planning for the more overall effect if we have a serious increase in population, possibly not so much on the southern end, the city end, but more on the northern end. Even if these people are walking on the footpaths, the footpaths on Northbourne Avenue in some places are falling to pieces. Some of them are good; some of them are not so good. What work have you done around not so much the piece by piece impact but the overall impact on the inner north of having a number of thousand more people who will all have to move somehow?

Mr Gill: In many respects we have been responding to that because north Canberra has been impacted by the development of Gungahlin. If you were to go back to a committee similar to this in 1991, when there was a report on the Gungahlin external travel study, they made a number of recommendations in terms of what needed to be done to respond to that development. In many respects we have been implementing aspects of that over the last 15 to 20 years, whether it is a revision of main road infrastructure, improvements to the public transport system, the implementation of traffic management schemes in residential areas to limit the impact or to protect the amenity.

That is the sort of approach that we are continuing to pursue. You will see, in the construction of the Gungahlin Drive extension and the planning for Majura parkway, the sustainable transport initiatives, and trying to encourage greater use of public transport, walking and cycling. There is a substantially increased program of provision of footpaths and cycle paths. So there are a range of measures that, as part of our ongoing activity, we are responding to. For instance, you would be aware of the work in Hackett and Watson, where residents have concerns about traffic infiltrating through Maitland and Madigan Street and the government's response, in terms of provision of traffic lights at Phillip Avenue and Majura Avenue and some local area traffic management schemes to either help pedestrians or address some of the rat running tendencies of other motorists. So there is a series of programs through which, as part of our ongoing program, we address either large developments, if you treat Gungahlin as a large development, or more localised developments, as in the case of the inner north and inner south.

MS LE COUTEUR: The Turner bike path in peak hour is incredibly well used. It has recently been resealed, but what about increasing its width?

Mr Gill: Things like that can fit into the category, yes. At the moment we are finalising an infrastructure plan for pedestrian and cycling facilities. Improvements to trunk cycle facilities, in terms of width, has been one of the recommendations.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am aware that there will soon be a Northbourne Avenue study into fixing Northbourne Avenue.

Mr Gill: A feasibility study looking at public transport and cycling facility requirements on Northbourne Avenue has recently been commissioned.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you any idea of the time lines for that?

Mr Gill: I understand it will commence in September-October.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have any idea how long it is going to take?

Mr Gill: I understand that four months is the duration of that because there are some outputs in the current financial year that have to be progressed. There is a process of doing the feasibility work, engaging the relevant stakeholders as part of the consultation process and then coming up with the recommendations that would need to be considered by government.

MS LE COUTEUR: Clearly, if there are more people in that area there is likely to be more impact on public open space. Has anyone done any work around what this could mean?

Mr Byles: Ms Steward, the Executive Director, Land Management and Planning, deals with the management of our open spaces.

Ms Steward: TAMS and our division are not responsible for doing the strategic planning for open space but we do have a role in providing feedback about the utilisation of the open spaces that we have. That can inform ACTPLA's recommendations about the size of open spaces and their specific use.

In the areas where we are looking at consolidating residential development, other jurisdictions have found that we need to take a different approach to the way in which we design open space because land is at a premium and you have a very diverse group of people who are using the same space. More people using space means that we need to look at ways in which it is designed so that you can achieve the goals and aspirations of a much broader group of people.

For that reason, in terms of the facilities that people use for open space, instead of the district-level approach that was previously done in the past in new release areas, where every new area had one of their own sporting fields, soccer fields, and preferably everyone wanted a swimming pool and so on, we have had to look at having multipurpose facilities. That means looking at our open space in a way that says we need to provide a range of recreational facilities but probably in an integrated way with really good public transport to enable people to get there. That has implications in terms of parking. That means, in terms of higher density areas, that, as

well as changes in the way people are using open space, we have actually had to think very differently about how we design it.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you basically saying that you are going to have to catch a bus or get in the car to go to sites of open space? You were saying that you are going to have to do things differently in that consolidation. Is that what it boils down to?

Ms Steward: It really means that when people are accessing open space they would look at other ways to do it. Partly it might be through improved connectivity, through either public transport or better cycling networks or pedestrian networks. So it is not so much about providing more parking spaces for people to be able to drive in to use those spaces—but obviously there is a need to do so—but it is really about a broader range of strategies to enable the community to have access to these spaces.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you see the quantity of public open space and sporting facilities remaining the same? Do you see the amount of public open space staying the same in the inner north or is it likely to change?

Ms Steward: The history of urban consolidation is that open space comes at a premium. It does mean that we have to utilise it in a more effective way. It means that, in terms of design, it needs to be looked at from different perspectives. What I would like to reinforce is that TAMS is the manager of these spaces and places and we provide that kind of commentary back to the planning authority, because it is important to understand how people use the open space so that the design of it is actually better.

MR COE: Earlier, rat running through the inner north was mentioned. It is a topical issue. Monash Drive: how does that feature in the long-term plans?

Mr Gill: Monash Drive does not actually feature in the long-term plans of the current government. It has requested the NCA to review the national capital plan with a view to removing Monash Drive. So it does not feature in any long-term road planning for the ACT government at this point.

MR COE: And there are no contingencies that are undertaken or that sit on the table regarding Monash Drive?

Mr Gill: Contingencies or alternatives?

MR COE: Governments come and go. If a government in 20 years time says, “We’d like Monash Drive”—

Mr Gill: Let me expand a little on the response. I made reference earlier to the Gungahlin external travel study, looking at the impact of Gungahlin. One of the recommendations of that study chaired by John Langmore was that the reservation for Monash Drive be preserved as a long-term option in case it was required. That was seen in the context of whether public transport was not successful in achieving the shift that was necessary or that other road constructions were insufficient to provide for the transport needs.

Subsequently, ACT governments have taken a view that Monash Drive should not be progressed, and there has been no planning done within the department in terms of progressing Monash Drive. More recently, there has been a request to the National Capital Authority about removing it from the plan—I understand, as part of the discussions between the ACT government and the Greens party. When you are looking at Monash Drive, there is more than just the transport aspect of it; there is the environmental impact and the impact on the amenity of residents in the inner north which need to be balanced in that broader discussion, I would suggest. But as it stands, there are no plans to plan for or to construct Monash Drive.

MR COE: With regard to parking and the increased demand for parking which comes from high density living, are there any plans which the department is looking at, perhaps by way of resident permits or other kinds of prioritisation for residents or visitors, for on-street parking?

Mr Gill: There are no current residential schemes being considered at this point. There are very few residential parking schemes in Canberra. There are a limited number in the city, but in terms of broadly based residential parking schemes, there is really no current planning for that at this point.

MR COE: So there are some residential schemes—

Mr Gill: There are a few—

MR COE: in the city provided by TAMS?

Mr Gill: There are a few isolated schemes that have been implemented over a number of years in the city.

MR COE: Right.

Mr Gill: Previously the Allawah flats had had a permit scheme that was for the residents of those flats. They were very specific; they were not broadly based. The general response has not been to head down that track in terms of managing and parking.

MR COE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Do you have more questions?

MS LE COUTEUR: Not immediately, no.

THE CHAIR: While we were talking about that other matter, I was thinking about the land use policy and the tendency now with higher density to get requests coming forward for community gardens. Would there be any thought given to look for suitable land in that area if we are going to have higher density community garden space?

Ms Steward: Absolutely. Those are the kinds of initiatives that we would be willing to work with the planning agencies on in order to identify suitable sites for that kind

of use. It is really important in doing so that it is not the unusable land—the land that is somewhere that has no great value in terms of the development—because those sorts of projects are what brings the community together. We recognise that and we are working with some community groups now to support those projects.

THE CHAIR: There is also the issue of the use of community parks at night and whether or not they could be used at different times of the day. A lot of people work all day and may not have the opportunity for recreation—other than walking the dog, for instance—other than on evenings and weekends. Would that be taken into account—I am sure it would be—so that these areas are secure and have plenty of access points to them and are overlooked by residents so that they can be safe places for people to be?

Ms Steward: That is correct. The design of the surrounding urban development is critical to whether or not a park is successful. The general feeling nowadays is that you design the residential development around the perimeter of public areas so that there is the opportunity for surveillance. You also place parking spaces in close proximity to other community facilities so that if you have events during the day, particularly for our senior citizens, there is the opportunity for senior citizens to use the park and have seating close to where children play. So again you get that surveillance. There are many ways in which we can make our parks safer, simply by how we design the urban areas around them.

THE CHAIR: Are you concerned about the maintenance of them as far as the plantings are concerned? I know we are getting plenty of rain at the moment and I know our dams are up to nearly 60 per cent—or more than 60 per cent now. That is fantastic. Obviously, this is not necessarily going to continue. Are we concerned about how we are going to keep the plantings sufficiently watered?

Ms Steward: That is probably one of the most critical elements in terms of any kind of landscape design. It needs to be resilient in terms of both climate change and the climate of Canberra. There are species that we know are totally appropriate to those sorts of locations. What the community is looking for in terms of the species that we use is finding a balance. There are areas where we know we could plant grasses which would be drought tolerant but they are not the type of grass that people feel comfortable sitting on. It is uncomfortable because it might be the wrong sort or it is a bit prickly.

I talked about having multiple uses. We design the planting and the grass type so that they are completely appropriate to the use that we think will occur. So if there is going to be an area that we need to have water for that is an outcome we want to achieve in terms of plantings. At the time we try to design into that some kind of water-saving device or way in which we can capture rainwater to be able to irrigate it without having to irrigate at all. But it is a consideration. It is a cost to the community—that is true.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any more questions, Mr Coe?

MR COE: We received a submission about the inner north and the inability of the infrastructure to cope with further developments, including poor water pressure,

sewerage issues, poor run-off after rain and the flooding of streets in the inner north. Is that likely to be exacerbated should further development take place?

Mr Byles: I am not privy to that submission. Without seeing the specifics, I cannot generalise. I will ask Mr Gill, again, to respond.

MR COE: I am happy to show it to you. It is a public document.

Mr Byles: Okay. I just have not seen it.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is on our website.

THE CHAIR: If you want to look at it later on and reflect on it at all, it is on the committee's website.

Mr Byles: Thank you. Without taking time now, if Mr Gill could respond generally, and if there is any follow-up we can do it out of session.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Gill: In relation to the assets that we have responsibility for, in this case it is probably limited to stormwater?

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Gill: As I said, the current infrastructure is adequate for the current level of development. In some cases, as new development takes place, there will be a need for some to be supplemented and some local augmentation. Examples of that have been in Braddon where there has been quite a reasonable amount of development in recent years and we have had to supplement the stormwater system in that area.

My expectation in a general sense is that there will be a need to augment some areas for stormwater systems to limit the impact on public roads because in many cases, from a stormwater point of view, when the capacity of the pipe system is reached there are what they call overland flow paths where water travels along. In some cases development may impact on the flow of that overland flow, so that needs to be considered.

MR COE: Is the capital funding there to actually support this kind of work?

Mr Gill: There is an annual program of capital upgrade funding to augment existing infrastructure. If we feel that is not adequate to address a particular issue we will seek a stand-alone project to deal with it. Until we are aware of the actual requirement we do not put in a bid.

MR COE: I know that a lot of infrastructure in the ACT is ageing.

Mr Gill: It is, yes.

MR COE: A lot of it was built by the NCDC perhaps in the 1960s or 1970s—or in

the 1950s in the case of a lot of the inner north infrastructure. I know it is in need of repair. Are there going to be any synergies in terms of scheduled or required maintenance that is going to be required anyway at the same time as upgrades to maintenance due to densification?

Mr Gill: You are quite correct in indicating that we do have an ageing asset base. Seventy per cent of the existing assets in the ACT were built in the 1970s or earlier. That is coming on stream. Depending on the asset that you are at, you have got a service life of 40 or 50 years in the case of roads. Typically, there is a service life of 100 years for stormwater assets.

There is an ongoing program of replacement or rehabilitation of existing assets. Sometimes they need to be supplemented when there is further development. Irrespective of development, there is a need for ongoing replacement. That is why we have an ongoing program. In some locations, because of specific developments, we need to augment that.

MR COE: Are we likely to see an increased rate of deterioration when we return to average or even above-average rainfall?

Mr Gill: Rainfall is quite significant in terms of the impact on road pavement. It brings the worst out in road pavement. When you have got heavy rains you can see the actual condition of the cracks in the road surface and you will see the propensity for potholing. In an overall sense, we take a long-term view of what the weather and climate conditions will be and develop our programs along those lines. We would expect to have an ongoing program of replacement of road and stormwater infrastructure over time.

MR COE: Say we have three, four, five years of above long-term average rainfall soon, are we going to see a significant deterioration in the inner north?

Mr Gill: Irrespective of the inner north, in the unlikely scenario that we have three or five years of unseasonal rain, it would have a significant impact on the existing infrastructure and it would require replacement sooner rather than later. As I said, we take a 25-year, 30-year view of climatic conditions in terms of our planning.

MS LE COUTEUR: Talking about what might not be a long-term view, everyone is saying that with climate change we are likely to have more extreme weather events. In terms of more extreme rain weather events, will we end up having to do more work on our stormwater in the inner north?

Mr Gill: We believe in general, as a consequence of climate change, the likelihood of more severe and more intense rains, that we will have to augment the existing system because it has not been designed for that level of intensity. Irrespective of whether it is the inner north, the inner south or across the rest of Canberra, we believe we will need to augment our stormwater systems to respond to that particular aspect.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would that be the case, given what you have said, regardless of whether or not there is any intensification of the urban—

Mr Gill: Yes. That is a general rule and then there will be—

MS LE COUTEUR: And specifically also for the inner north.

Mr Gill: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Even if nothing changed now, you are still going to have to redesign the stormwater?

Mr Gill: As a general rule, our asset management planning indicates that we will need to augment the stormwater systems to respond to this particular aspect of climate change over a period of time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. You cannot do it all in a year. In the inner north it is not going to make your task particularly harder if there is more redevelopment.

Mr Gill: It will be no different. It is part and parcel of what we would expect to do, irrespective of the development regime.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, did you have any more questions?

MR COE: No thanks.

THE CHAIR: We do not have any further questions at the moment. We will be sending you a copy of the transcript and you will be able to check that for accuracy. Also, if members have other questions on reflection, we will get those to you. Thank you very much for appearing before us this afternoon, Mr Byles, and the rest of the officials. We are very grateful to you for coming in.

Mr Byles: Thank you, Ms Porter, and committee members.

Meeting adjourned from 3.56 to 4.20 pm.

COLEMAN, MS MARIE YVONNE, Dickson resident

GRIEVE, DR JAMES, Dickson resident

MacNEILL, MR FELIX, Dickson resident

McQUEENIE, MS FIONA, Dickson resident

METHERELL, MS VIRGINIA, Dickson resident

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Thank you very much for appearing before the planning, public works and territory and municipal services committee inquiry into RZ3 and RZ4 residential redevelopment policies. You have all had a chance to read the privilege card. I note that you have all indicated verbally that you understand its implications. Do you have some opening remarks?

Ms Coleman: Yes, I do have some opening remarks. I am a member of this Dickson residents group. It is not a formally constituted body; it is simply a loose collection of people. I am accompanied today, as you can see, by people from various parts of Dickson, and in a moment I will get people to make some comments that are specific to their areas.

As a general statement, we all recognise that the process of urban renewal is extremely complex, especially when compared with greenfields development. There is a need for authorities to deal not only with technical issues such as infrastructure capacity but also with issues of minimising adverse impacts on the amenity enjoyed by residents. One can see, just from reading the media, that there is constant friction in large cities such as Sydney, for example, and conflict between resident amenity and the pressure for densification of certain areas.

I have been engaged with the issue of the social aspects of urban planning since the 1960s. I say that because it is so easy to get dismissed as just another little old lady who is a bit of a nimby. I have been involved, when I was director of the Victorian Council of Social Service, with a lot of the discussions which were occurring when the Victorian Housing Commission was razing entire suburban blocks in Fitzroy to create housing complexes for over 4,000 people. Of course, in those days it was so much easier if you had a bulldozer and you could get rid of the people who used to live there.

More recently, I have been looking at housing issues in the context of the Productivity Commission's inquiries into caring for people with disabilities and caring for an ageing Australia. I have provided today a copy of the final submissions, just to add to your reading capacity. But the point is that in those I do discuss at some length some of the housing issues which are facing people with a disability and people as they age. So the whole issue of affordable, accessible rental housing is extremely important. I am also currently convening a working group with national women's organisations, academics, business people and others looking at possible strategies at a national policy level to enhance the availability of affordable, accessible rental housing.

I note that the proposed territory plan variation 303 makes reference to solar access but not to human access, which is something of a gap, one would have thought. Yet we all know that universal design is of critical importance in any affordable housing strategy. We note also the constant changes in ACT development strategies. Many of us who live in Dickson participated in good faith in the lead-up to the 2003 Dickson

neighbourhood plan, yet we now find that that document permits some very strange occurrences in Dickson which do not appear entirely consistent with the plan and perhaps some residents feel a lack of good faith as their own amenity is now being destroyed.

The 2003 plan, for example, mentions the virtues of terrace housing in the context of densification of B11 and B12 zones. This implies orderly development, not random acquisition of individual extant housing and conversion on that site into overscaled, cheaply constructed dwellings, many not compliant with the building code, creating shading on neighbours and certainly not conforming to principles of universal design. Many other statements of intent in the 2003 neighbourhood plan are either now deliberately misleading or simply ignored by planning authorities.

The committee is specifically inquiring into the extension of redevelopment of the RZ3 and 4 areas surrounding Northbourne Avenue north of Macarthur and Wakefield. We note that the Northbourne housing precinct is comprehended by this and that the precinct in its entirety is currently under the protection of the ACT Heritage Act. Its residents are tenants of ACT housing. Many, some of whom I have spoken with, would prefer to be allowed to continue to live in the suburbs of Dickson and Lyneham.

In Dickson in particular there is scope for orderly redevelopment of some older housing to meet the needs of these residents, were they to be rehoused, and were ACT housing to consider developments, for example, along the lines of some currently underway in Melbourne. I draw to your attention that the Office of Housing in Victoria has recently developed a multistorey unit which contains all of the good features of accessibility, solar capacity—all of the things which everybody says are good things—in Windsor for 120 people. That development can be found on the web. It is called K2.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have visited it.

Ms Coleman: You have been visiting it, yes. There is also an extremely interesting community organisation known as Wintringham Housing, with which I am familiar, and which was named after a gentleman who was a long-time resident of the old Gordon House in the city. I think it is interesting, and indeed instructive, that when Gordon House was sold away from having been a shelter for homeless men, it was not bulldozed and the site filled with buildings which subsequently turned out to have shoddy design and construction; it was in fact converted into an extremely upmarket boutique hotel. I have stayed there. It is a very pleasant place to stay—rather more pleasant than when it was Gordon House, I must say.

I think we could look at the Sydney Ancher buildings in the Northbourne housing precinct and come up with something which, rather than going to six storeys or more, might involve a redevelopment on a sensitive basis, much perhaps as Gordon House was redeveloped, and be an effort made by ACT housing and others to develop appropriate accommodation—certainly it can be six storeys—for homeless people, disadvantaged people and people with physical disabilities and the like, which could certainly fit into those precincts and would enable many of the people who are current housing tenants who would like to stay in Dickson to stay in Dickson. I think it is extremely important that we look at means of converting sound buildings of

architectural merit, rather than demolishing them, so that we can enhance the availability of accessible, affordable and well designed housing.

We have asked that there should be an immediate revision of the Dickson neighbourhood plan and that the kinds of things which are being supported now by ACTPLA be put on hold. We want the Dickson neighbourhood plan updated as a matter of urgency. It should establish a cohesive vision for planning and development across the entire suburb, both for now and into the future. It should act as a complementary document to the territory plan, providing greater certainty in planning issues for both residents and developers.

The revised plan should be developed via a consultative process which seeks a range of views from residents, developers, government, ACTPLA, independent town planners, architects and sustainable building experts. The revised plan should be based on the most recent population demographic projections for Dickson. We wish to see whether or not the government sees Dickson, as the 2003 plan stated, continuing to be a residential suburb with provision for older people as well as young families. Planning for older residents to allow ageing in place should incorporate universal design principles in all new residential buildings, rather than an assumption of removal of older or disabled residents to aged persons complexes. I speak with some personal view about that, since I am approaching 80.

If done properly, a Dickson neighbourhood plan could be used to establish Dickson as a showcase for the best in sustainable and affordable urban design, both within Canberra and for the rest of Australia.

I would like to ask Ms Metherell to provide some of the images, just to give you a graphic picture of what Dickson is looking like at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Coleman.

Ms Metherell: I am a member of the Dickson residents group. I moved there relatively recently but I am dismayed very much by what is occurring, not because I or any of my group are opposed to infill but because we are opposed to some of the developments which are occurring, as Ms Coleman has said on a previous occasion, in an acne sort of manner, dotted all over.

I have surveyed, to the best of my ability, what is happening. I will hand in to the committee this diagram which shows some of what is existing and what is proposed. They are occurring particularly on the western side towards Northbourne Avenue. That is the Marsden Street one up there, which is causing some concern as well.

At the moment there are 178 units either under construction or proposed. If the remaining blocks in Majura Avenue go at an estimated seven units per block, that will be another 126, bringing it up to at least 304 units. So there is a considerable amount of building going on. I am not saying this is exhaustive but those are the ones I know about.

I also remind the committee of the vision statement for Dickson which was contained in the neighbourhood plan:

Dickson should enhance its cohesive community where people of mixed age, income and cultural backgrounds will value its history and will be safe and settled. Dickson will provide a range of quality, environmentally sustainable residential areas that will retain a tranquil leafy ambience.

This is a typical street in Dickson. It is in fact Dooring Street. As you can see, they are quiet, narrow, leafy streets.

THE CHAIR: We are being shown a photograph of a street in Dickson.

Ms Metherell: I will provide a folder that contains many of the photos that I will show you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Ms Metherell: This is a development in Randell Street in Dickson, adjoining Stockdale. The foreground is Stockdale Street, where a new development is about to proceed. Adjacent to that new development is a further double block that has been sold, presumably for development.

MR COE: Is that taken from Dooring Street?

Ms Metherell: No, that is taken from Stockdale Street. I suppose what we think about that development is that it is overbearing, out of character and simply not the sort of thing that we want to see happening anymore in Dickson.

This is a development in Dooring Street currently nearing completion. I think it is No 105 or 104; I am not quite sure. We have concerns about setback. I am not sure that that is three metres. In any event, it obviously overscales and overshadows the house next door, in terms of its scale. It is not compatible with the neighbourhood. There is another view of the setback. Again, I express my doubt that that is a three-metre setback.

With respect to some specific concerns about proposed developments, there has been some talk about the one at 77 Dooring Street. This is Dooring Street on garbage collection day with the current residents. I am not sure where future residents are going to put their bins. The white house there is where the proposed development of six units will be. This is a very sharp, dangerous right-angled corner. I do not think it is an appropriate place for numerous cars to be entering and exiting, or for the garbos to be trying to collect garbage bins. There are already problems.

This is the proposed development for that area. Apart from its aesthetic notions, it also introduces a rather novel concept of the windowless bedroom. That central piece of the building contains bedrooms with a very high level—attention was drawn to that notion by an architect.

This is Hope Street in Dickson, a quiet little street, very pleasant. The building on the right is about to be replaced by this one. I do not think you need to be qualified in anything to argue that that is simply not compatible with the streetscape. It is glass

and aluminium. When you look at the environmental values that this building represents, I would suggest they would be zero. That is directly west-facing glass. The front units—there are two front units, top and bottom—block sunlight to the units next to them. In turn, the unit blocks sunlight to the house adjacent to it. The Dickson neighbourhood plan clearly talks about solar access, rights to privacy and all of these things. We would hope that ACTPLA are policing it, or is it up to residents to bring it to their attention all the time?

These are the Majura Avenue developments that I spoke of—50 units going up. They are practically all sold; they sold reasonably quickly. There are five two-bedroom units amongst them. They sold on the first day. The rest of the units are one bedroom. Also in the Dickson neighbourhood plan is a commitment to have a mix of one, two and three-bedroom facilities. I think you will find that a lot of them are single bedrooms, and they will lead to a diminution of the mix of people living in Dickson.

MR COE: Is that the one on the bend in the road just near the Wakefield intersection?

Ms Metherell: It is; just past Wakefield Avenue, opposite the oval.

MR COE: Yes. Are the driveways on Majura or on the back stretch?

Ms Metherell: They are on Majura, I think, because they go into a basement. I think there will be huge traffic problems. However, we all think that, given that the amenity of living on a four-lane major road is a lot less than living on a quiet street, it is an appropriate place for development. We would argue that we are not against development along that entire stretch, which seems to be happening anyway. A number of blocks have been sold and one sees notices up there that they are to be developed.

As I have said, we are not opposed to infill. What we want to see is appropriate housing. Opposite one of those developments in Doorring Street is this two-unit development. I suggest it could even have three, had they designed it that way. They have not. But there is quite a substantial area at the back. It is well set back from its neighbours. It acknowledges the architecture in the area. In fact, it quotes the duplexes, which are so dominant in Dickson. It is obviously high quality. I think there are solar panels there, indicating that someone has considered environmental issues.

Finally, I would like to say we do not want to be portrayed as nimbies. That is not the issue here—it is not against densification; it is against entirely inappropriate buildings which are affecting our amenity. I would like you to speak to one of the residents who has been most affected by that and whose house abuts that building there, Dr Grieve.

THE CHAIR: I will just let you know we have five more minutes.

Ms Metherell: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Dr Grieve, if you can speak briefly so that members can ask questions.

Dr Grieve: All right. I am here really as a victim of the destruction of amenity that Marie Coleman mentioned. I am surrounded at the moment, or I was until recently, by

seven houses. Of those seven houses, six are either demolished and in the process of being developed or are going to be demolished very soon. I have lived in my house for 32 years. I do not want to move. I have a developer knocking on my door asking me to sell him my house. I do not want to sell him my house, especially since he is the one who, the last time he knocked on my door, tried to extort from me half the price of the back fence that he, I believe, is obliged by law to put up at his own cost.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Grieve. Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: We have only got a few minutes and there are a lot of things that I would like to say, but one very simple one: yesterday the institute of planners came and talked about some of these issues. Their suggestion for a solution was the idea of having a quality panel of some sort which would come into play if there was, as they suggested, redevelopment of more than five units. Do you think that would address your issues?

Ms Coleman: It would certainly help if we felt certain that ACTPLA was indeed checking every development application to make sure it was consistent with the guidelines, just as a starter. When I worked in the commonwealth public service with people who were applying for old age pensions they were required to comply with the guidelines. That could work. Ms McQueenie is suffering in the—

Ms McQueenie: We live in the RZ2 zone, but we can see what is happening. In our street there is a proposal for putting a 12-unit development in the RZ2 zone, and it is a very quiet street. It is completely out of scale for the rest of the community. When we have been looking at this issue of planning what strikes me is that, while we are calling on the Dickson neighbourhood plan to be reviewed, there are 11 different planning zones across Dickson. To think that one zone does not affect a resident or a business in another zone is just wrong. What happens in one zone affects other people in other zones. There is increased traffic and noise and there are increased parking problems.

We are really looking at this neighbourhood plan to give both residents and developers more certainty in what can be delivered and have a conversation about the level of densification in Dickson and what that looks like in the future, both now and 20 years into the future. How can we act more sustainably and provide affordable housing? Let us have a bit of a plan and vision when we have a conversation about that for a neighbourhood plan. A quality panel would certainly help as well in implementing that plan, along with other ACTPLA guidelines.

MS LE COUTEUR: As you may be aware, neighbourhood planning was one of the things that was in the Greens-Labor agreement which have not happened as yet. We have had a lot of discussion with the government, who are pretty opposed to—to be polite, they have considerable resourcing concerns about it. What do you think would be a potential rule that would work reasonably well? I appreciate that you believe you need a neighbourhood plan here and possibly the biggest problem was that the original one was never made part of the territory plan. They were not. They are informational only, unfortunately. Can you think of what would be an appropriate trigger for when a suburb should have a neighbourhood plan? At what point did you say: “We have got to do something. This is not an isolated problem”?

Ms Metherell: There has been an upsurge in building in the area, driven I do not know precisely by what, but—

Ms McQueenie: It is not just the Dickson community; it is anybody who is currently in an RZ2 zone. That is where we are starting to feel the bite. That will move outwards as we move away from the city and people are trying to densify. You are looking at Woden—they are having problems in the RZ2—Lyneham and O'Connor. It seems to me that as you move out from the city and densification there is pressure for more and more densification. This seems to be triggering community resident acts and a requirement for developers to move in. That seems to me to be a trigger for coming up with a neighbourhood plan.

Ms Coleman: Wherever there is an attempt to bring about urban renewal which does not proceed with the engagement of the residents there will be political dramas.

MS LE COUTEUR: Absolutely.

Ms Coleman: It is not a partisan statement; there will be political dramas. That is why urban renewal is not easy unless it is 1960 and you are the housing commissioner in Fitzroy. It is not easy. It is always problematic. It is absolutely essential to not only have some kind of respected body saying that proposals meet certain kinds of criteria, but there has to be a shared understanding between the planning authority and the residents that this is the way we are going to go. I do not enjoy saying that I feel that I was made a patsy by participating in the 2003 neighbourhood planning process, but I do feel I was made a patsy—and, you know, that really pisses me off.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, do you have a very quick question? We do need to go on to the next lot of witnesses.

MR COE: Yes, just a quick one. With regard to the notification of development applications, do you think that they go far enough in terms of stakeholders?

Ms Coleman: No.

MR COE: What would be an appropriate level of distribution around a particular development?

Ms Coleman: For a start, most older people do not fill in their mornings checking the ACTPLA website to see what new development applications have been lodged, and most older people do not get around to actually downloading and reading all that documentation. They are not well placed to do any kind of assessment of those development applications. So there is a problem when the detail is all on the website and it is pretty much incomprehensible unless you have a background in architecture or you have built a lot of houses in your time. There is a very considerable limit as to how far letterbox drop goes.

I was offended by the statement attributed—and he may not have meant it to come out like that—to the director of ACTPLA saying that it was not the business of ACTPLA to consult with residents about individual applications. I think he needs to rethink his

role vis-a-vis residents in an urban area which is being subject to urban renewal. It is important to develop effective communication.

Mr MacNeill: Could I suggest two main things: wider distribution of letterbox notice, rather than just four or five houses, and some form of simplified up-front statement. Accessing the actual application is quite a technical exercise. It is not easy. I think one could develop some very simple, commonsense criteria about the issues of size and height—a commonsense one-pager that almost anyone could read to see whether they really needed to probe any further.

THE CHAIR: Like a frequently asked question type of page which would answer frequently asked questions about this particular development. Is that what you are suggesting?

Mr MacNeill: The obvious issues that might concern people in the neighbourhood, yes.

Ms McQueenie: Or a pro forma, something that you can guide residents to fill out. That would help ACTPLA process this stuff as well.

MR COE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I am sorry it has been so brief. The secretary will pick up the exhibits now—the map and the photographs. We will send you a copy of the transcript. If there are errors, get back to us and let us know. If members have got some other questions, direct them to Ms Coleman and then you can direct them back to the secretary. Is that all right?

Ms Coleman: Certainly. I am happy to do that, yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, everyone.

Ms McQueenie: Thank you for your time.

ARCHER, MR KENNETH, section 47 resident
GARVEY, MR JIM, section 47 resident
KRIPPNER, MS KRISTEN, section 47 resident
MADEJ, MR KEN, section 47 resident

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Welcome to this hearing of the planning, public works and territory and municipal services inquiry into RZ3 and RZ4 residential redevelopment policies. The buff card which is there between you is the privilege card. Could you indicate that you understand the implications of that? Thank you. Would anybody like to make some opening remarks? We will then go to questions.

Mr Garvey: We have organised it so that we have quick speeches from different perspectives. I have some photos and maps here.

THE CHAIR: Do you want to give them to the secretary now?

Mr Garvey: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Mr Garvey: I am appearing before the committee on behalf of the residents of section 47, Turner. I will introduce the committee to the building and streetscape in this section of Turner. Ken Madej will discuss the feelings of the community in the section. Kristen Krippner will talk about the diversity of residents and the sense of cohesion in this section of Turner, and Ken Archer will conclude our brief presentation.

As time is limited, we are aware that the committee is looking beyond the wider implications of RZ3 and RZ4, but as the moratorium in section 47 was specifically stated, that is what we have chosen to address today. Our view is that, if the moratorium is not renewed, section 47 should be zoned an RZ1 suburban zone, not RZ3, as would be currently anticipated.

Map 1 indicates the housing stock in Turner; that is a section of it. You can see I have given you a code with “E” for extensions. Many people are under the impression, I think, that this section of Turner is like some other areas that have been earmarked for development and then let run down. As part of our joint submission, I visited the majority of houses in Turner—in this section, not Turner. I visited about 23. I was really surprised by some of them because the beauty of the houses is not revealed until you actually go inside and see the gardens at the back. From the streetscape, which is an important part of the suburb, they appear as they were initially intended—modest, late 1940s red-brick bungalows. Many of the houses marked “E” on map 1 have been substantially renovated or extended. So to describe them as being inefficient and of poor quality is very misleading, in my opinion.

Another thing to note from that is that there are only two private rental properties in the section. One was purchased quite recently and one has been inherited. There is also a housing trust cottage in Bent Street, block 23. The rental at block 15 Greenway Street was purchased by a speculator who does not live there. The other one, No 1, in Holder Street, around near block 1, is owned by a developer but he does live there as his main home. I think it is important that we appear as residents who live there and

we want to live there. We have chosen to live there. Anyone who bought in there recently bought in under the moratorium, when it was current.

The houses here are not grand. They are not like the houses in Reid or the Tocumwals of O'Connor; they are somewhere in between. They, to us, represent an interesting example of post World War II development in the garden city layout. Ken Archer has a copy of the National Trust's streetscape study of the section and the neighbouring sections when we were looking at applying for heritage study. The only reason that did not go ahead was that the funding was not provided, despite two applications.

Section 47 has not lost its identity, largely due to a number of long-term residents, and the moratorium has helped. The people that have moved there largely want to value it as it is. We are not interested in making a quick profit and moving on. Some of the residents have lived there for up to 60 years—I think the oldest perhaps for 63 years. We have lived there since 2004; other people for different lengths of time.

Photos 1 and 2 show you the development. That was taken on Monday morning at half past seven. Photo 1 is looking south-west from the corner of Macleay and Holder Street, looking over block 9. The other one below it shows the development on the corner of Condamine and Macleay Street, which fits in with the RZ3 plan. You can see that it is very hard from those two types of pictures to imagine that the suburb will look anything like it does now if it is an RZ3 zone.

That is not to say that we believe development is impossible. In our own house, we have reconfigured the kitchen to the northern side, we have put in double glazing, insulation and so on. The same thing could happen in the speculator's house next door. It is tailor-made for a rear extension, yet could still maintain the streetscape. I will hand over to Ken Madej to talk about the community.

Mr Madej: I am a resident of section 47. Section 47 is a small pocket of Turner that houses 24 residents, some living alone, others with their partners and/or families. What I would like to share with you today is what this community means to me and to place the concept of community into a broader context.

In August 2005, which is exactly five years ago, my partner and I moved to 28 Greenway Street. We chose the house because of its heritage value and its 50-year-old garden, and found the location ideal because of the parkland opposite and the proximity to our respective offices. We were also comforted by the assurance of what a moratorium on development provides, temporary as it was likely to be. A side note here is that the moratorium gave us hope, and without it we would not have purchased in the area.

People become members of a community when they feel emotionally secure, and it is difficult to clearly articulate the value of community and how the loss of it impacts us. We—that is, my neighbours and I—share an emotional connection, often made on a day-to-day level, such as walking our dogs in Haig Park, dropping in for that late afternoon coffee, or even the collection of mail when away on business or holidays. My neighbours are my extended family. Since arriving in Canberra 15 years ago, I can honestly say that section 47 is a haven, which is why I am here today fighting to maintain its existence.

Contrast this with a study commissioned by the ACT government and released earlier this year. Prepared by the Australian National University, the report, with a substantial section dedicated to Turner, detailed that “high density living was a barrier to social interaction”, with most respondents in the study having lived in their apartment for only a short period of time, consistent with the popularly held view that apartments have a high frequency turnover. Communication between neighbours in apartments is made through polite messages left in mailboxes, which is clearly an indication that people living in close proximity value privacy above community.

The final point I wish to make makes use of the buzzword “sustainability”, one definition of which is the capacity to endure. Ways of living sustainably can take many forms—for example, reorganising our living conditions, such as retro-fitting our homes for increased energy efficiency and making adjustments to our lifestyle, such as walking to work, all of which is exemplified by our community. Admittedly, this is only one approach to sustainable living, the principles of which also underpin the broader policies of the major political parties in the ACT.

To conclude, we support what the government is trying to achieve vis-a-vis sustainability but not at the expense of established networks, friendships and a diversity that our community brings to the area.

Ms Krippner: I am just going to follow on from Ken and touch on particular strengths that I see in what makes a community. This comes from two experiences. We used to live in Leura in the Blue Mountains right next to the national park. We had a very similar cross-section of community, so I have come to really appreciate the diversity.

I was thinking about what makes a community. There are lots of stock answers. For me, it is a very complex set of influences and confluences of people and geography and sociology. Living in Turner in section 47 means that I can go home and that section and our house is a space to retire from work. It is very close to lots of amenities, but it is a private space; it is a quiet space. Because we have lots of neighbours around us—we know them, we trust them—it gives us lots of opportunities for planned and incidental encounters. That is really reassuring. It is a very nice thing to have.

We like helping out our neighbours. It is not that we go out to help them out; it is an incidental. It is a fact that we have the proximity but we also have the privacy within our own gardens and our own houses. It is almost ironic that you have both aspects, but that is why it works. We lived in a town house before we came to our house in Turner and it did not work. We were very shut off, even though we were very close to people. Having a garden again was a really important thing for us. People in our section all enjoy our gardens, but we also enjoy other gardens. We like the seasonal changes which Turner has. We enjoy the park and the streetscape. So from a visual idea it is really important.

We have a lot of old people in our section. They have been there since 1946, 1945, 1954. I see them over the fence and we talk and we share. It is a reciprocal arrangement. Those people will not be moving from that section, but they like to have

a connection with people and they feel valued and we take time to spend with them. From a social cohesion aspect, it is really important. It is very effective. It is not daily or weekly. It is sometimes a month before we see each other, but it is a real communication. Even when we bought our house the agent said to us: “You realise that there are some really good neighbours around here. They will look after you.” We were reassured by that, and when we met Gwen and Margaret on either side of us it was exactly that sense. It is a very positive strength.

I like the stories about Turner too, about how all the residents were used to getting to Haig Park and having barbecues in the barbecue thing. It was just a spontaneous thing on Friday nights—they would sometimes go and do that. Those social stories were important.

I also like the fact that it is a safe area and I am physically safe. My father is now in a wheelchair. It is very easy for me to take him out for a walk. It is good for the young kids that are coming back into our section that they can ride their scooters. There are not too many cars et cetera. People know each other and they support each other, which is a really great thing to have happen.

We can hear the kids playing in their backyards on Sunday mornings. I have not had that for a long time. All that sort of stuff is going on. The impact on the school I think is really important too. I do not know how many children live in single-unit apartment blocks—not many anyway. There is also the whole thing about the kids and their social interaction with older people. They often mark the old people’s birthdays et cetera. So there is that sense of community as well.

The other thing about section 47 is that it is a really important slice of social heritage and history for Canberra. They are modest houses. The facade is modest anyway. I think that sense of space and identity actually brings with it a sort of a peace. There are lots of mental and physical health benefits to it as well, because people do not live in a place for 50 years without those sorts of aspects coming from it. For us, we chose section 47 for all those things, but also because we like the scale of the buildings, we like the mix of the ages and we like the streetscape. It is a very liveable place to be. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Archer.

Mr Archer: I will not speak for very long because I know you want to reserve some time for questions. Could I hand to the committee a copy of the report to the National Trust of Australia from the ACT Heritage Council prepared by Peter Dowling in 2004?

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Archer: I think that was referred to in evidence before you on Tuesday. That is the document that represents that study. The fate of that was that the Heritage Trust expressed interest in the active consideration of the proposal. It required some historical documentation to go with it. It needed a grant to produce that historical analysis. That grant was not forthcoming so therefore the application did not proceed further. But there was definite interest in relation to progressing that particular

application. It is a comprehensive assessment of the architectural and streetscape significance of the particular area. I otherwise endorse what has been said by my neighbours at the table before you. If the committee has not done it, I would urge you to walk from the city—

THE CHAIR: We have done that.

Mr Archer: If you are minded to do it again, look at the children on the way through. You will not see any until section 47. There are very few children. The progress of densification from the city is a process of excluding particular age categories from that area. It is the old and it is the young. That progress in Turner has been crudely done. I am not aware of a like example of an inner city suburb being razed in the way that Turner is. There is an opportunity, I think, for the Assembly to make an imprint on the future streetscape of that area of the city and preserve something of what used to be in that particular area. We come here as residents of section 47 saying that the moratorium should be preserved and the architectural integrity and the streetscape integrity of that area should be preserved.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Archer. Ms Le Couteur, we have only got time for a couple of questions each, I am afraid, so one each.

MS LE COUTEUR: I refer to the submission that you put in. In the second-last paragraph you say, “Residents feel they will be forced to leave their homes if this development is allowed.” I can quite appreciate that you would prefer that it does not happen—and that message is loud and clear—but what I cannot quite appreciate is why you feel you would be forced to leave your homes. I do not believe there is any proposal for the compulsory acquisition of houses or anything. Why would you be forced to leave?

Mr Garvey: I do not think it is a question—other people may contribute—of compulsory acquisition. It is a question of overshadowing and a complete loss of privacy, and a complete change in lifestyle. There have been two large single-block applications in Forbes Street and in Macleay Street. The Macleay Street one is underway, which is a three-storey building of eight units, I think. The one in Forbes Street was originally for 12; it is now 10. It is not that we see that development as completely abhorrent. It is just that it is not compatible with maintaining an existence in a single-level bungalow next door. That is the difference. If you have got 10 one-bedroom units, a different demographic is going to move into it. It is not going to be someone who is going to stay there for 20 years. I think that is the feeling.

Mr Archer: As a father of three young children, I can say that there are absolute safety issues in relation to that sort of development. They are not residents of the area in the sense of being committed to the community of the area. They are inevitably and predominantly people who are there for a moment. There are safety issues that arise in relation to the bringing up of children or the care of the older residents in that sort of environment.

Mr Madej: I live on the corner of Greenway and Bent Street. The entire back of the house has been remodelled to take advantage of the sun, including the main bedroom. If there were apartments next door I would have no private open space. They would

look into my back garden, which is total glass.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, did you have a question?

MR COE: Yes. Earlier I asked the ACTPLA officials what communication they had had with section 47 and section 63 residents. I was wondering—given that you all are very important stakeholders in section 47—what communication, if any, ACTPLA has had with you all regarding the moratorium and the future thereof.

Mr Madej: Zero.

Mr Archer: Zero.

Mr Madej: Even making phone calls to ACTPLA regarding the moratorium, going back the last couple of years, has yielded very little response. People do not know what is going on.

MR COE: So ACTPLA have had no direct communication with you. There have been no letterbox drops, telephone calls or doorknocking.

Mr Madej: Nothing.

MR COE: Has there been anything at all? Community meetings?

Mr Madej: Nothing.

Mr Archer: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: You all found out about the inquiry through the ads in the paper, I am assuming?

Mr Garvey: The ads in the paper and the Turner Residents Association.

MS LE COUTEUR: I see.

MR COE: Did any of you participate in the discussions in 2003 regarding the moratorium?

Mr Garvey: There are people still in the section. The person who made a submission was David Abbott—and MJ Diethelm, I think. He was one of the people involved in the 2003—

MR COE: It absolutely amazes me that the reason the moratorium is in place is that a community did come together in 2003 to actually band together and say, “We like a moratorium.” It absolutely baffles me that a key stakeholder would be not engaged in this process by ACTPLA in the lead-up to the expiry of that moratorium.

Mr Garvey: Yes.

Ms Krippner: The other point is that a lot of our residents are elderly and they would

have difficulty getting here to speak to the committee. Their absence does not mean that they are not vitally interested in the welfare and the, dare I say it, moving forward of the suburb. Not in the sense of their own personal thing, but they would like the things that they valued in that section for their kids and their grandkids to be maintained for other people's children as well. So it is quite altruistic.

THE CHAIR: We need to finish now. I just wanted to clarify, Mr Archer, your fears around safety for the children. What aspects of their safety do you fear might be jeopardised?

Mr Archer: It is an environmental thing about the number of people using that place immediately next door. There is a four-foot fence between the neighbours and the back fence. The children are on view to the next-door neighbours. That is an incident of suburban living, but if it is a three-storey plus loft building next door, it becomes a matter of open display of young children to whoever chooses to rent the house next door. It is not one house; it is 10 single-bedroom units.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for clarifying that for me.

Mr Archer: Could I just add one thing that I do not think has been covered. In relation to the development of Turner, the submissions that we made this afternoon and the written submissions that you received stress diversity of both the community and the architectural styles in the area. One thing that I would add is that Turner is diverse already, in the sense that there are forms of architecture and forms of living there that are diverse. There is a lot of public housing, there are a lot of tenant single-bedroom units, there is high rise in the area, there are detached bungalows and there are medium density places that have been built as well. It is, in our view, a balance that has been struck already and its capacity to soak up more in relation to greater density of development is being stretched.

Our submissions generally say that the balance that we seek has already been struck and moving further towards unit development will destroy a balance. In relation to the fabric of the community, and given the high level of public housing in the area, I think that that element of community is going to be very important in ensuring that the social and pro-social aspects of the community are preserved. The Turner flats and the development around the O'Connor shops are examples of public housing being properly and appropriately integrated into the community. What we see is that, without residents in the true sense living in those environments, the balance that presently exists in relation to those sorts of issues will be lost.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Archer, Mr Garvey, Ms Krippner and Mr Madej, for appearing before us this afternoon. We will get copies of the transcript to you so that you can check them for accuracy. If members have other questions, we will make sure we forward them to you, and you can get answers back to the secretary.

Mr Garvey: Thank you.

Mr Archer: Thank you.

TUCKER, MR WILLIAM, section 63 resident
WILLIAMS, MR ROBERT, section 63 resident
YMER, DR SANIE, section 63 resident

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Thank you for coming to this hearing of the planning, public works, territory and municipal services committee inquiry into RZ3 and RZ4. Are you familiar with the privilege card, the buff card that is next to you? That being the case, do you wish to make any opening remarks?

Dr Ymer: I would like to make a five-minute opening statement and then we will receive questions.

THE CHAIR: Okay, thank you.

Dr Ymer: We would like to thank the committee for providing an opportunity to present our views and experience as residents in Hartley Street at section 63. We represent the views of co-signatories of submission 31, some of whom could not be here today as they are overseas or have family commitments.

For us, it is clear that sustainable urban development is a complex process that requires an equally sophisticated and integrated policy approach. Currently, there is an over-reliance on a policy of increasing housing densities along transport corridors in established areas without ensuring that development is strategic—that is, taking into account established land use, community infrastructure like schools and ultimately meeting the needs of the community now and into the future. Like others, our view is that, to date, the market has not delivered the housing mix sought by the objectives set out in RZ3 and RZ4 planning policies or codes.

We want to briefly reiterate a number of key messages to the committee. Sustainable cities must be underpinned by strong, diverse communities who care about their environment. This includes long-term and transient residents of singles, couples and families at various stages of life. Critical to this is the provision of high-quality, diverse accommodation options, the utilisation of local infrastructure like schools and an appealing urban environment.

From our experience, it is clear this is not being delivered in our local area. Development is largely driven by the investor market, which has resulted in the provision of predominantly one or two-bedroom apartments within walking distance of the school, largely attracting a transient population with a substantial increase in cars. We consider that multi-unit developments solely consisting of one or two-bedroom apartments are inappropriate around a school.

Increasingly, good-quality housing stock on single blocks are being demolished for apartments, the quality of which may not attract longer term settlement. Families, particularly single-parent families, have been leaving the area as accommodation options decrease and the cost of suitable accommodation increases.

The growth of the Turner school in recent years has resulted in more traffic in and around Hartley Street as parents come out of area. This suggests an unresolved issue of how to include families in planning and development policies in the inner city,

which would reduce car travel.

Our experience also suggests potential solutions. We propose that the rules governing development in section 63, blocks 12 to 21, be revised to allow houses to be renovated, knocked down, rebuilt as single dwellings or dual occupancies. Consideration should be given to two-level townhouses with at least three bedrooms and reasonable living areas that would accommodate families who wish to use the school.

We suggest that planning allow a level of development in our school precincts that is between the existing moratorium and unrestrained RZ3, as it currently is. This would provide a transition zone between school and high density housing in the surrounding area. We recommend that the moratorium that is currently in place in Hartley Street, section 63, as well as section 47, be maintained only until appropriate rules to provide positive, long-term development outcomes have been developed and implemented. This would provide long-term surety and consistency for residents, many of whom have seen a variety of policy changes and reviews since the high density zoning came into effect in the early 1990s.

We recommend that the moratorium that is currently in place north of Macarthur and Wakefield avenues be lifted. This would allow development to focus on poor housing stock in this area. However, we stress that this development should also be under the rules that provide diversity of development, including housing suitable for families close to schools. In this case, Lyneham high school is in the vicinity. We also encourage the committee to explore measures taken elsewhere, both in Australia and internationally, to address the design quality of buildings and environmental landscaping, factors that would contribute to development that provides long-term residential options.

In conclusion, we all want a sustainable urban environment consistent with the aspirations of the territory plan 2008. We contend that the inclusion of these measures will support the sustainability goals of the territory plan and create diverse communities that underpin long-term urban sustainability.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I would like to ask a question. You mentioned at the end measures taken both in Australia and internationally to address the design quality of buildings and environmental landscaping, which you also mention in your submission. Could you point us to where in Australia and overseas these might be, so that we can actually investigate those?

Dr Ymer: We have not actually investigated them broadly, particularly in terms of quality—

THE CHAIR: I just wanted to know where we could look for them.

Dr Ymer: I would not be able to direct you to that at the moment. We could take that on notice, perhaps.

THE CHAIR: Certainly, you can take it on notice and get back to the secretary. Just let us know where we could find that information so that we can examine those examples.

Dr Ymer: We do have some websites I could probably refer to you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for that. Ms Le Couteur?

MS LE COUTEUR: You said that what you would like to see is the moratorium lifted when there are some better rules than RZ3. You talked a bit about what those rules might be, but could we get clear exactly what you think they might be? I think you were talking about town houses as being a possibility. I do not want to put words into your mouths but what I am really interested in is what you would see as appropriate.

Mr Tucker: We have a strong preference for allowing houses in section 63, and I think similar rules might also apply in section 47. From our point of view, we would like residents to have the possibility to knock down and rebuild, which the moratorium currently does not allow. I think dual occupancies would be suitable and, as you just indicated, town houses could also be suitable. We think town houses could be good because it would increase the density more than dual occupancies and would provide homes that are suitable for families. They could retain small garden spaces, more than the large blocks of small units are providing.

Dr Ymer: With development applications that go through the ACTPLA process, there does not seem to be much flexibility in the current codes, if there are already too many one and two-bedroom apartments in the zone, to make a decision therefore to put in some townhouse-type residences of about three bedrooms. There does not seem to be that flexibility. Even though the code has an objective of housing diversity, there seems to be a gap in the delivery of that kind of diversity. We have put this in various DAs, to say, “There’s a gap between detached housing and one and two-bedroom housing; what about in between, and affordable housing for families?” In fact, the school does not even get assessed as part of these DA assessments. It does not even get mentioned as being in that vicinity.

MS LE COUTEUR: By town houses, are you meaning—

Dr Ymer: Two-level town houses. There are some three-bedroom apartments down the end of our street but they really are very small and have very little living space if you have kids. I know of only one family that lives down there; it has not attracted families. That was an area that previously had rundown houses. I am talking about section 64. It had a laneway; it was an area all owned by the ANU which had rundown houses. It was an opportunity to do something there for high density development, but the opportunity also to include family oriented housing was not taken up. I guess you are looking at good size living areas of at least 110 metres square, perhaps, upstairs bedrooms—

MS LE COUTEUR: You are envisaging it might be possible to have more than two on a block? You said something about higher density than dual occupancies. I am just trying to get a sense of what you think would be acceptable.

Dr Ymer: I think no more than two levels, but if there are more than two on a block then as long as they respect the amenities of their neighbours, I do not think that

would be a problem.

Mr Tucker: More generally than just applying to the area now under the moratorium, the rules in the RZ3 zone, as Sanie has already said, are not leading to diversity in the developments and there could be rules which require diversity within a development to include a proportion of three bedroom and two-bedroom apartments, if they are apartments, so that it is not all one bedroom.

MR COE: We went down Hartley Street with some ACTPLA officials a few weeks ago. One of the things that I certainly noticed, and I am sure my colleagues noticed as well, was the traffic situation there and the issues that come with being near a school, with kids crossing, buses and whatever else. Is it your opinion as residents that the street can handle increased density, with regard to the foot traffic especially, but also the parked cars?

Mr Tucker: I think parked cars are a problem and perhaps the parking could be changed. It could not take a large increase in density. As you know, the buses really have difficulty sometimes coming down there if there are cars parked on the wrong side of the street.

Dr Ymer: It depends on who you are trying to attract into the street. If it is suitable development that attracts long-term residents, in terms of families, because if you are sending your child to a school there, it is a long-term commitment—for us, it has been 10 years—then there is off-street parking, if that is available with whatever that development is.

If we are looking at, as a comparison, the sort of density development that has occurred in Macleay Street, where it is mostly one to two bedrooms, and there are short-term residents there, they all have cars and they spill over onto the street. If that occurred in the street, I think it would be very difficult to have buses and parents trying to drop their kids off at the same time or pick them up. It is a short period of the day; it is the mornings that are difficult.

In addition to that, building in the area has brought a lot more through-traffic as well, which adds to it. If it goes the way, for example, that Macleay Street has gone, I think you would see more cars parked on the road because they are short term. If they were going to stay there long term, you would think about not having another car. You would have one car, if any, like we do. But if you are short term then you are probably more likely to have more cars and there is usually inadequate parking with those developments in Macleay Street.

MR COE: Would it be fair to say that your view is that if it was the same density as Macleay Street the current traffic situation would not handle it?

Dr Ymer: I do not think so.

THE CHAIR: Mr Williams, did you want to say something?

Mr Williams: Yes. I agree with the comments that were just made. It is a street that is not very wide. It obviously has its peak times but I would not want to say that it is not

manageable under signage banning people from driving. The big issue sometimes with a lot of those developments, and we look at it at the end of our street, is that while the facility or the units might have underground car parking, during most of the weekend or at most times, people generally will try and park out on the road if they can. As long as that is manageable, my thoughts are that during those peak times it could be managed, but it would be busy, that is for sure.

THE CHAIR: Members do not have any more questions. Did you have anything else you wanted to say before we finish? We are running over time but I realise that you did not start until late so I want to give you an opportunity to say anything else that you want to say in closing.

Mr Tucker: We noticed you asked some questions about ACTPLA processes and communication.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Tucker: We have noticed an issue. When DAs are put out for public consultation there is often not complete information provided and ACTPLA do not seem to do screening to decide whether an application is complete and it should go out. There is no evidence of any assessment being done by ACTPLA, so it would help if we had some information from ACTPLA about what they thought about a development.

When we have commented on a recent development, we have gone through the appropriate codes and seen numerous places where the proposed development did not meet the rules and we have pointed those out, but whether ACTPLA had already assessed that or not, we do not know. From what we see, it looks like they have not, but presumably they are doing something we are not seeing. It is hard to tell.

Lots of applications are getting approved despite not meeting the rules, so there are various exceptions. Unless someone makes a fuss about them, it seems ACTPLA do not try to make developers adhere to the rules in many cases.

MR COE: Following on from that, a question I asked earlier was whether ACTPLA had communicated with people in section 47 about the future of the moratorium. Have you had any communication directly from ACTPLA about the moratorium?

Dr Ymer: Recently?

MR COE: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Or in the last year or two.

Mr Tucker: No.

Dr Ymer: Not from ACTPLA directly, no.

MR COE: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will get a copy of the transcript to you so that you can have a look at it for accuracy. If members have any other questions, they can get them to you and you can get them back to the secretary. I thank you very much for giving us your time this afternoon and for your submission.

The committee adjourned at 5.36 pm.