



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT
AND CITY SERVICES**

(Reference: [Nature in our city](#))

Members:

MS S ORR (Chair)
MISS C BURCH (Deputy Chair)
MR J MILLIGAN

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 13 MARCH 2019

Secretary to the committee:
Ms B McGill (Ph: 620 50124)

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 20 May 2013

The committee met at 3.03 pm.

**ALBURY-COLLESS, MS MARIANNE LOUISE
ARMSTRONG, MR MATTHEW JOHN MANNIGEL
MABBOTT, MS BARBARA
PINKAS, MS GEORGINA MAY
PRYOR, MR GEOFFREY GORDON
SIM, MR MICHAEL JEFFREY
SMITH, MR GLEN ANDREW
WATSON, DR CHRISTOPHER LEX**

THE CHAIR: I declare open this first public hearing of the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services inquiry into nature in our city. The committee announced this inquiry on 6 December 2017 and it has received 71 submissions, which are available on the committee website. This is the first of seven hearings that will be conducted between March and May 2019.

Today the hearing will be conducted in three sessions. Our first session is a panel discussion with eight individuals who made submissions to the inquiry. It will be followed by a second panel discussion with seven residents groups, community associations and community councils. Finally, the committee will hear from Professor Ken Taylor.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all the witnesses for making time to appear today. On behalf of the committee, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. I also extend a welcome to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be with us today.

We will now move to the first panel discussion. On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome Glen Smith, Geoff Pryor, Michael Sim, Christopher Watson, Matthew Armstrong, Marianne Albury-Colless, Georgina Pinkas and Barbara Mabbott. Thank you for appearing today, and for your written submissions to the inquiry. I remind all witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the pink-coloured privilege statement which should be on the table before you. Could everyone take a moment to look at that and acknowledge that they are fine with everything that is said in the statement?

Ms Albury-Colless: You circulated that, didn't you?

THE CHAIR: Yes, it should have been sent out prior to—

Ms Albury-Colless: Yes, I have read it; thank you.

THE CHAIR: Has everyone seen the statement? Can you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement? I think everyone has nodded or said yes. Can I also remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and are being webstreamed and broadcast live.

We are ready to move to questions. I want to start with quite a broad one. I know this has been touched upon in every submission that has been presented. Can you please state for me what you see as the importance of nature within Canberra?

Mr Armstrong: I am here representing myself, as a private citizen. I work for ACT Playgroups. At present I go out into parks and I set up paint and play, which is basically a preschool in the park. Those spaces vary, from Ainslie, which is under the trees, to Franklin, which is under one beautiful big gum tree. I see those playgrounds as one of the earliest connections between children and the natural environment. That would be my answer, in short.

Ms Pinkas: I am representing myself and the people who love the ACT, which is everybody. Key to my submission is that we cannot afford to maintain the existing landscapes that we already have in our urban environment. We need a much more strategic approach to that, to the existing areas and to the new areas.

A lot of the landscaping in the ACT was planted over 50 years ago. We are talking about living organisms that have a life expectancy, and we need to have a much more strategic approach to maintain the existing landscapes, as well as looking at the new landscapes in Gungahlin and areas like that, to make sure they are much more effective in climate change mitigation and maintenance. Planting a single manchurian pear out the front of a building is not going to achieve anything, except to look pretty.

Dr Watson: I would like to bring to the attention of the inquiry that, as our population is expanding and is going left, right and centre, particularly to Queanbeyan and Googong, and now with this cross-border development down to Ginninderra Falls, we have to think in terms of the region and we cannot just be tied in to our ACT boundaries. That means we have to work much more closely with the New South Wales government and their various sections.

I have been involved with the Ginninderra Catchment Group and the Ginninderra Falls Association. My thinking is that it is a cross-border issue. Ginninderra Falls, for instance, was not even mentioned in the 2015 report by our Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. I hope that in 2019, this year, she is able to look across what is not a fictitious border but the line on a map.

Mr Pryor: I am a resident of Kambah. I want to highlight to this inquiry that nature is the very basis of our society and we cannot exclude it; otherwise we are going off in a very artificial way. The evidence is really strong that, from quite a range of different resources, if we exclude nature, or if we minimise nature—and we need to talk about that bit carefully—we as a society are much reduced, not only as individuals but as a collective of people living in various conglomerations within that.

I also want to make the point that, unless we think about our society in that way, we are really underpinning the way in which we see our society in a human exceptionalist way; that is, with the exclusion of other species. We have a right, I think morally but also practically, to take care of the other elements of our community. I make that point very precisely because in Kambah we have those sorts of clashes, and we are losing the capacity to be better human beings if we exclude these sorts of components.

Ms Albury-Colless: I am representing myself in this particular matter. I would like to draw to the committee's attention that Canberra was actually based on garden city principles, which was a reaction to the threats, the woes and the pollution of the industrialisation that was occurring, particularly in Britain and in Europe.

We need to look at and apply really good analysis to the threats that are currently confronting us. I would say they are climate change, overpopulation and a loss of biodiversity. I see a pervasive lack of scientific-based policy and planning for the future. To me, that sort of planning should be based on achieving a healthy environment, a healthy biodiversity and healthy humans. Someone quite famous once said, "It's the economy, stupid." We might know who that was. I would say that that needs to be very much updated. It really is: "It's the environment, stupid."

Ms Mabbott: I am a volunteer on the ACT Wildlife hotline. The value of nature in Canberra is that people get a chance to see our iconic wildlife. The concern I have is that the wildlife are being marginalised, affected very badly by disease, and there are not enough volunteer hours to address this problem or the landcare problem, which is also by volunteers, which degrades their habitat. We have some very serious issues there.

Mr Sim: I am representing myself. I have been a resident of Canberra since 1970 and I have been a park care volunteer since 2008. I am coordinator of the Isaacs Ridge-Mount Mugga Mugga park care group but I am representing myself. I did not have a chance to coordinate comments. I am also not commenting on behalf of the parks and conservation service, which run park care. I hope they support my comments, though.

I also contribute to Canberra nature map, which is a great community-based record of what is around Canberra—the plants, birds, insects and other animals. I have just on 3,000 sightings, mainly in the Isaacs Ridge-Mount Mugga Mugga area. It has given me an appreciation of rare plants, orchids and so on, the common native plants and the exotic threats to our environment.

My perspective is from that of the nature reserves, but I realise we have to bring nature into the city and stop building over what is there. Recently, we have been doing a program on a rare butterfly which has only just been rediscovered in the ACT. That has given me an idea of seeing uncommon butterflies in my garden and around the suburbs. Nature does come into the suburbs; it also, unfortunately, goes out into the nature reserves. The street trees, which were selected over 100 years ago, have now proved to be invasive plants. They are into our nature reserves and causing threats to our wildlife.

Mr Smith: I have a slightly different angle on some of those comments, although I agree with all of those things that were just said and echo them. One of my interest areas in this particular submission and appearing before the hearing is actually about mental and physical health and the benefits of getting involved in nature as a local Canberran, the chance to get out and enjoy the abundant green and blue spaces that we have now. I just wanted to put on record that that is a great thing for the mental and physical health of our community, particularly as we age, and we need to get

opportunities to go to more active places. Parks and reserves are a great place to do that.

THE CHAIR: That has given us quite a lot to go on. Can I just clarify this for the record: is everyone of the view that having nature within the ACT, particularly as it urbanises, is an important aspiration, for lack of a better word?

Mr Sim: Absolutely.

Mr Smith: Yes.

Ms Mabbott: Absolutely.

MISS C BURCH: Touching on your points and the comments that have been made about playgrounds being one of the first ways that children interact with nature, about the important mental and physical benefits and, as you said, Mr Sim, about bringing nature into our city, not just preserving the landscapes that we have, I am interested in the ideas you all might have as to how we can do more of that bringing nature back into our city.

Mr Pryor: Are we clear about what we are talking about here with respect to nature? The term “natural environment” gets bandied around and I think they are very different terms.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pryor, you have raised a really good point—it is a discussion the committee had, too—as to how we couch this. I have had people come up to me since we have put out the terms of reference saying, “You are not talking about nature; you are talking green spaces,” or “You are talking about park reserves.” It was a decision by the committee to go with “nature” because we thought that was the term most easily understood by a lot of people who wanted to talk about quite a few things. We completely acknowledge that it will have different meanings to different people. Is there something you want to add to the conversation in defining the term?

Mr Pryor: I see this issue as being important for my daughter and for my granddaughter. I see the need for the opportunities that we all have experienced to remain the same for those generations. That is very important in the way in which you design urban environments. Going to the question that you have just asked about how you bring this back, first of all, we should make sure we have not excluded whatever is there. It is surprising where nature actually comes from.

Secondly, there is considerable knowledge as to how people can really build urban designs and organisations which would answer that sort of question. It is not so much that there is not the knowledge there; the real issue is the intent behind the leadership and the organisational structure that will make that work.

THE CHAIR: Planning will be a concurrent theme throughout this. We might have a few more questions and then delve into some of the planning.

MISS C BURCH: That was going to be my next question.

Ms Mabbott: When you say “bring nature back”, the point that I would like to make is that nature is here. The question is almost: do we own this space and have the right to shut out all creatures, make them starve to suit our purposes? Actually, they are here. Then the question is: how do we accommodate them? The fact is that most people love them and we are enriched by them. The question is: do we favour the farm lobby, for whom wheat is a commodity around the world, for whom meat is increasingly a commodity, or do we look at what is unique here in Australia, which is the wildlife? That is what tourists come for and what people want to see. I notice that there is no person here from the group that made a submission about the kangaroos: the farming people and the ecologists. There is no politician here. I think it is a reflection of the lack of will and interest generally being shown for the priorities that a lot of people feel should not be ignored so much.

THE CHAIR: Does someone have a comment to make on that?

Ms Pinkas: I just want to get back to the planning. Without planning our urban environment, which includes habitat and trees, and without working out how we can maintain that, we will not achieve anything. To me that is the crux of the issue. Whether it is keeping trees or habitat, we have to have a plan, we have to have strategies, and we have to have funding sources. They are my key tenets about what we need.

THE CHAIR: Before we jump to what we need or what we can improve, I want to take a step back and say: what do we do well now, in your opinions?

Ms Pinkas: “Did we do well?” should be the question.

THE CHAIR: You can qualify it, but that is my question I throw to you. What do you think is done well?

Dr Watson: I was going to say that since the parks and conservation service has been set up—I knew the first director, Dr Bryan Pratt, who recently died, and it was under his aegis that the parks and conservation service was set up and it was under his aegis that we set up Namadgi National Park, under federal minister Tom Uren at that stage.

I would comment that that has been great, but Canberra is expanding. You mention population increase. We are 400,000 now. If we keep growing at the same rate, we will be 800,000, double, in 35 years. That will be in about 2050. Hell’s bells, what will it be in 2100?

What I am trying to say is that with the parks and conservation service we have to work much more closely with counterparts, as I said before, across the border. We already have the recipe here. I admire the parks and conservation service. McNamara puts an article every week in the *Chronicle*, and I have spoken to Daniel Iglesias, the director. But they have to be much stronger and they have to be funded properly. One of the problems—I will just go on for half a minute now—with the increase in population is that we are trying to keep up basic infrastructure but the funding is not there for the parks and conservation service and its counterparts in New South Wales. This is a bit of a tragedy.

Ms Pinkas: And that is the urban environment as well.

Dr Watson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I am very conscious of time. I am not trying to be difficult. Does anyone else have something they want to add?

Mr Sim: I would support those comments about the parks and conservation service. I have been dealing with them for the last 10 or 11 years. They are seriously underfunded, so they cannot always do what I suggest or what I need help on. They do react swiftly when there are some major threats to our environment. Last year there was an invasion of coolatai grass up in the Brindabellas; they got onto that extremely quickly, and they found some more this month. Just a few days ago I found some pink pampas grass growing on Isaacs Ridge, in the pines. I reported that on the Sunday; it was treated by the Wednesday. If they realise it is a major invasive threat, they can handle it, but they just cannot tackle all the other threats: St John's wort, Paterson's curse and so forth.

Mr Armstrong: I like the parks; I am in there regularly. There are some beautiful parks around town, and there has been a lot of money put in to making parks particularly interesting. Boundless has not exactly been a government-specific park, but there is a lot of effort being put in to making play spaces good, interesting and beautiful.

Ms Albury-Colless: I endorse those comments and move on to the firies. I was lucky enough to go to a convention about 18 months ago on the fire regimes now being implemented around Canberra. I was delighted to see that cool burning and mosaic burning are being adopted, not only to try to manage endangered species but also to possibly mitigate more intensive burnings in the future, which would be a very big worry for us all, as well as the species that inhabit the various bushlands around Canberra. I would particularly compliment the firies in moving towards that particular modus operandi.

Ms Pinkas: Moving on from invasive species, I was totally unaware of this when I put in my submission, but African lovegrass is an invasive species that is not being managed by anybody. I think the committee needs to really seriously look at that and see at least an education program for the ACT community. Nobody I have spoken to except you seems to know what it is.

Secondly, we need to focus not just on the parks and conservation service but also on the capacity of whoever manages urban parks now to have urban amenity within our city, which includes playgrounds, recreation areas and tree shelters. They are going to be the main thing for climate change mitigation; we need to have effective tree forestry within our suburbs.

THE CHAIR: I want to get back to planning. I already have a sense from the panel that planning is an integral part of this. If I have misunderstood that, please feel free to correct me. If we can use that as the point of departure, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects in their submission recommended that a detailed landscape strategy be prepared. Would the panel have any views on that suggestion, for or

against?

Ms Pinkas: Definitely.

Ms Albury-Colless: Great idea.

THE CHAIR: My next question is: if there was a strategy—and I am sure AILA will have quite a strong view on what goes in that strategy, but I would be interested to hear your views on a landscape strategy—what would you immediately think that would include?

Ms Pinkas: First of all, you need to know what the strategy has to achieve. There is no point having a strategy without knowing what you are trying to achieve. The objectives of the strategy need to be very clear—things like recreation, climate change mitigation, those sorts of issues, and sustainability. The second thing in the strategy—and I keep batting on about this—is the funding mechanisms to achieve that. That is what I think should be in it.

Mr Pryor: I would like to support you in that because we have not got an idea of a vision of Canberra in the sense of nature and the future of our city in the next 10, 20 or 30 years. Whatever the strategy might be, it has got to have an agreed base to it.

The second thing—and I think Georgina has touched on a couple of other issues—is: structurally who is going to have an impact on developing this particular strategy and what are the vehicles by which you actually bring people together to enable them to genuinely talk about this? Therefore, they need to be not necessarily lobbyists for particular industries. It has got to be a very transparent process, and that will be hard because everybody has different views. The strategy as an idea is fine. It is the implementation, really, that is the most difficult challenge.

Ms Mabbott: I thought the Fenner School's comment about verges was absolutely excellent, and it is a win-win for everyone. Finding ideas like that and making them work, I think, is just a brilliant thing.

Dr Watson: I was going to make a point that public hearings like this are wonderful because these issues can be brought up. I have been here long enough to remember the old days of the federal NCDC where any urban plans meant a mandatory inquiry. Unfortunately, we have lost that push now. For instance, if we had had a public inquiry for the cross-border development at Ginninderry, down towards Ginninderra Falls, that would have been vital for the landscape side, site lines and so on, how close should housing come to the Murrumbidgee Gorge, how close to the Ginninderra Falls and so on. There has not been the vehicle, until this committee, for years for these sorts of things to be raised. Sad, isn't it? But congratulations; this is the first time.

Ms Albury-Colless: Going back to planning, I suppose I see a great number of major issues here because, to me, one of the big problems of planning at the moment in Canberra is lack of integration, lack of policy, lack of policy that is actually based on really sound biological environmental principles. I hear what you are saying about the landscape suggestion in terms of the landscape architects. I would want to see that soundly based on science. I would like to see it soundly based on connectivity. I

would like to make sure that offsets are very carefully managed and not managed by economists. I would like to see mapping of environmental assets. And overall I would like to see who has not only the resources but also the responsibilities under legislation to basically achieve compliance. Without the legislation in place to achieve compliance to allow nature to thrive, we are whistling in the wind.

Mr Sim: I contributed to the review of Canberra Nature Park and to the review of the Nature Conservation Act in 2010, 2011. I am a bit disappointed that some of those recommendations have not been implemented yet. The Canberra Nature Park management plan is still imminent, after several years delay. I hope it comes out for comment in the next few weeks. It was supposed to be in early 2019, the last I heard.

That might help Canberra Nature Park and the larger reserves, but it does not necessarily help the smaller parks and urban parks and the connectivity that is required. The CSIRO has done research on connectivity that shows that wildlife needs large areas, 10 hectares or so, and every kilometre connected by corridors and thatches of plants. We cannot provide that anymore with the small-block sizes and big houses. People cannot have trees in their backyards and that sort of thing. The connectivity is extremely important to bring nature back into the city or keep nature in the city.

It is disappointing to see that the Canberra light rail urban meadow has changed in the expectation and results. It was going to be an urban meadow along most of the route. Now it has got some trees and tussocks at the side of the five-metre wide concrete strip, which is the track that the light rail runs on. I thought it was going to be an urban meadow like the trams in Nice, where the vehicles ride the rails through the grasses. I saw in the *Canberra Times* today the artist's impression for light rail stage 2 is running through green grasses. What has happened to Northbourne Avenue?

Ms Mabbott: Is it snakes, may I ask? People seem terrified of snakes.

Mr Sim: Sorry?

THE CHAIR: Is it snakes in the grass?

Ms Mabbott: Is it because of snakes? People are terrified of snakes in grasses.

Mr Sim: I have worked in the nature reserve for 11 years and I have seen one.

Mr Smith: It was more trams than having snakes there.

Mr Sim: No trams, but I have only seen one snake there.

Ms Mabbott: Okay.

Mr Armstrong: I might make a comment. I am looking at the perspective of children making a connection with nature in early childhood. There are two issues there in terms of a plan. There has been the recent review of play spaces to which I made a submission. I was involved in that review. In that review I was looking at the provision of fenced play spaces. As I work with children with disabilities, the

planning element of providing fully fenced play spaces is essential for a lot of people I know with children who do not have any sense of danger. There were small changes made to the planning process to accommodate that, but, in terms of nature in our city and access for children, fully fenced playgrounds are essential. Queanbeyan has six, which is like one per 8,000.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and I do get a lot of requests from parents to have the playgrounds fenced.

Mr Armstrong: One issue is the use of pesticides. In playgrounds I have experienced the misuse of pesticides, particularly glyphosate at Franklin—the way it was applied and what was done. In my submission I have made comments. More recently I found material from the Sydney Botanic Gardens and Centennial Park about notification of use in parks near schools. There is a lot of information which I believe the ACT could follow through on. Looking across to Europe, Germany is restricting the use of glyphosate and is looking to ban it in parks. There is a general international movement on the restriction of chemicals. Glyphosate is one example.

THE CHAIR: In summary, is it fair to say that everyone would be supportive of a succession plan, particularly one that really enabled nature to come into the city, supported the natural environment, clearly articulated space for nature—have I missed anything?—and was funded and had lots of strategies behind it?

Ms Pinkas: No. I think the issue is compliance, because we do have plans under public land which there is no compliance with, ever. As you would be aware, there is very little compliance with some of the Building Act. There is no point having a plan if you do not enforce it.

Mr Pryor: Sorry, I actually have another caveat, which I said earlier, and that is that it cannot be just done by a few people who are so-called experts, because really it is the future of our society we are talking about and that is very complex and much more engaged and not just simply linear thinking of disciplines. I would not agree to a plan if it was actually to be done by somebody hidden away in a little box and then coming out.

THE CHAIR: It would have to come with a lot of community engagement and development?

Mr Pryor: A very open and transparent process.

Ms Mabbott: But also focused on what outcomes we want to achieve, because otherwise we will be talking forever.

THE CHAIR: Because we do not have forever for this hearing, my next question is: a lot of people raised the issue of trees with me. I would be interested to hear, seeing we have got such a good cross-section of people and views, about deciduous versus non-deciduous trees or local versus non-local. Are there any views on what we should be doing here? Is there one that we should be prioritising over the other?

Ms Albury-Colless: Yes. I also put in this submission without having time to put it to

the Reid Residents Association, of which I am president. I am lucky to live in Reid and have lived there for 20-odd years. Of course we have conifers—*Cedrus atlantica*, Atlas—and we have *lusitanica*, oaks and a lot of other trees, including an invasive species, robinia. I have had intimate experience with that one, which I would rather not go into.

To me, one of the things we need to think about now is trees that are going to actually survive. Unfortunately, some of them survive too well and become invasive. We need to be very aware of that and use some forestry experience, environmental experience, and learn from that, not necessarily in a succession plan for replacing trees. I was really pleased to see Caroline Le Couteur’s initiative to look at a petition on replacing trees. I think we have lost at least 40,000, if not more, in the last couple of droughts and the one that we are in at the moment. I think really we need sound scientific underpinning to understand what is going to last when we replant.

Wide-canopied trees are obviously essential if we are going to try to mitigate climate change. Unfortunately, some of our indigenous species are not wide canopied, but I think we need a mixture and I think we need to be very careful about where we plant them. I think we need to be monitoring them. We also need to look after them. One thing is: a lot of money goes into establishing a tree. If it is not looked after then it can be vandalised or it can die from a lack of water. Basically, again, it is maintenance as well as resources, as well as some scientific underpinning.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone have a contrary view on that, or is it fair to say that the tree type is less important than it being fit for purpose, from a climate perspective?

Ms Pinkas: I think fit for purpose is the whole point. I referred dismissively to manchurian pears. They are pretty, but they do not achieve a lot more. The other issue is that there is not going to be watering of trees—in public areas, anyway. People are not going to waste their water on trees in public areas. I would totally agree that it is about what will survive under climate change and what we can maintain. Whether it drops its leaves at one time or over a year, as the eucalypt drops everything all year, is irrelevant. What is relevant is if it survives and if it achieves climate mitigation and low maintenance—those issues.

Mr Sim: I would like to make the point that it is not just trees; it is the shrubs, groundcover and grass that are extremely important.

Dr Watson: With the concept of biodiversity and so on, I mentioned to Daniel Iglesias, “What is the policy on the monocultures?”—the very opposite of biodiversity, with all the pine plantings, the introduced American *Pinus radiata*. He said, “Hopefully, we’re moving towards more biodiversity in that area.”

We ought to be looking to the Aboriginals. You mentioned when we started that we respect the elders, and so we should. With our Ginninderra Falls area, that area ought to be under joint management with Aboriginal people because there are a very large number of Aboriginal sites down there. Because it is across the border, it has been virtually ignored. There was a very good report, the Waters report, done on behalf of the developer.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to table that, Dr Watson?

Dr Watson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We can take a copy of that.

Dr Watson: It is called the *Ginninderry development project—Aboriginal cultural values assessment report*. I will provide you with a copy of that.

With tree regeneration and so on, I am ex-CSIRO. We have the 700-hectare CSIRO experiment farm that is up for grabs, and there has not yet been a public inquiry. A lot of that should be restored as natural landscape. Some of it is already there. Why can't we get the CSIRO or the federal committee to look at that 700-hectare site in our Ginninderra area?

THE CHAIR: Not being a federal politician, I am not sure I can answer that one for you.

Dr Watson: But it is within the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I know, but it is federal land. I understand your frustrations, Dr Watson. I grew up across the road.

Mr Armstrong: I am wearing another hat, in terms of ACT for Bees, and pollinators and so on, but my wife will take care of that later. There is a lot of research from Melbourne about how they are going to lose a lot of the major trees in Melbourne because of climate change. In the ACT we will also lose a range of trees, just because of an increase in temperature. In terms of planning, if you want to bring nature back to the city, planning for pollinators or planning for pollen and nectar resources supports the natural fauna of the ACT. There is a review that my wife did of the MIS 25, which included those resources, but we are yet to know whether it has actually become part of the MIS 25.

Mr Pryor: At the coast we have reforested a block over 40 years. The lessons from that are that it cannot just be done in pieces; there has to be a holistic notion. I am sure you know that. With urban design, there is a woman called Professor Birkeland. She talked about designing architecture into buildings. That conceptualisation is very powerful; therefore it brings together those sorts of ideas.

THE CHAIR: Weaving the natural and built environment together is something that you see as quite important.

Mr Pryor: I do not think it is exclusive, necessarily.

THE CHAIR: We are running out of time. I have one more question.

Ms Mabbott: I thought I would get five minutes to raise some very serious issues.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to raise those issues?

Ms Mabbott: Could I just make these points. While I have been on the hotline, I have become very concerned about the suffering of our local animals, also of the volunteers and probably of the rangers. Probably some of them are suffering from PTSD. What is going on out there is just horrendous. The animals are coming here partly because they have been driven from the coast; so do not think that that would not keep happening.

Canberrans do care. We get calls every day to the hotline, and lots of them. Examples of what we get calls about are bats being caught in the cheap fruit tree netting, which is simply moving the problem along to vets and local carers who work for free to rehabilitate them if they survive or to euthanise them if they are too wounded. They get holes in their wings from struggling with the netting. It does not take very long at all. These nets cost \$10, instead of what it costs to net a tree properly, which is about \$100. Bunnings sell it; it is just too easy. It is too tempting. But the costs to society are huge—losing the pollinators.

The other thing is the kangaroos. The ACT government will not issue licences to rehabilitate kangaroos. If they think it is a nice, clean thing when kangaroos are hit by cars, it is not. The kangaroos often stagger into the bushland carrying their injuries and lie there in pain or join their pack, end up somewhere else—perhaps Deakin oval—howling in agony, until finally someone calls in a terrible state and a ranger is sent out to shoot them. Partly, it is because once they are hit, it is a death sentence. We all know that, and it is demoralising to sit on the helpline and to know a minor injury is a death sentence to a kangaroo.

We are talking about issues with imbalances. I know the farmers are struggling with it, but if you could please lay all the issues open to everyone so that everyone could understand them and try to work on a solution together, it would be great. It is a really bad look for the national capital of this country to have a policy like this on kangaroos. Also, this method of shooting is actually quite barbarous, because the rangers sometimes miss and the animal staggers off into the bush. It happened with a wombat that had mange. It was an old, sad thing that had been reported for several weeks. When the ranger finally came out, he obviously did not want to shoot it. He sort of hit it but missed, and the blood was everywhere; the poor thing was racing down into the bush, struggling. That brings me to the next issue: wombat mange.

THE CHAIR: I will not cut you off there, but I can see there is quite a lot in that.

Ms Mabbott: It is a huge issue.

THE CHAIR: Yes. We have another day where, as opposed to individuals, groups can come in. We might get you to have a chat to the secretary afterwards—

Ms Mabbott: It is just a huge issue.

THE CHAIR: and maybe you can come in on behalf of the group.

Ms Mabbott: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We need to get back to the individuals now, because we have limited

time. I do have one more question. It goes to planning; it also goes to the history of landscape within Canberra. A number of people have written in, raising the Burley Griffin plan, the garden city, the city in the landscape—all of these different views of what landscape is. We also had someone make a submission saying we should not forget the local Aboriginal community and what the landscape means to them. My final question to the panel is: in going forward, do you see it as possible for us to balance all of these past landscapes and continue to maintain those while also building a landscape for the future?

Do you see it as a balance and do you see it as possible to bring together the histories that we have with respect to the landscape? There are the Aboriginal landscapes; we have a Burley Griffin plan and the garden city aspect. Going back to the idea of having a landscape plan, how do we honour all of those aspects, as well as building a landscape for our city, which is inevitably changing through climate change, if for no other reason?

Mr Pryor: I think you have phrased that question in a passive way. My perspective is that we should be clear about what we want. If we have an understanding of what it is we want, if we give nature the priority that I think most of us have talked about here, if we talk about the way in which our community functions as a viable, resilient community, acknowledging the questions of modern society and climate change, if we set out and are clear about that vision, then there will be the potential for bringing some of these forces together in a way that will add. If you simply say, “Can we balance it?” it seems to me that that is just open slather. My suggestion is that we need to be clearer about what we really want for Canberra. The bush capital notion based on the Burley Griffin planning has to be argued for; otherwise people will take it away and take the focus away.

Ms Pinkas: I entirely agree with Geoff; we need to build in those elements. But, again, this gets back to: what is our objective? It is for the future. We cannot keep depending on the past, particularly as technologies change, as you are fully aware. We may have everything coming by drone one day. The issue is: what do we need for the next so many years and then what are the valued issues from the past that we could bring forward into that for achieving the objective? You do not start with the stuff in the past; you look at where we are going, how we are going to get there and what we value that we can incorporate.

Ms Albury-Colless: I started initially talking about the fact that what brought about the garden city movement was a reaction to industrialisation and the dreadful things that were happening there. I would say that the principles and values that came out of that can be probably equally applied today with pollution, with climate change, with overpopulation, and I would say with planning. Balance possibly—I do apologise—can be regarded as a weasel word in some people’s lexicon. I think it needs to be prioritised. We need to know what we are actually valuing. Possibly both education and consultation are required there.

A lot of the developments that I could name off the top of my head at the moment—and none of the gateway to city project; Campbell 38, the former CSIRO block; or West Basin—have not been underpinned with really valid, authoritative, environmental impact statements. I would say that is a great tragedy for all those three

particular areas. Basically we need to look at our priorities. Yes, we want to survive, but we want to not destroy the environment, as in nature, for the future; we want to hand it on to our great-grandchildren. That is the key message.

Ms Pinkas: One point on environmental impact statements being funded by the developer to the government: having the developer do the environmental impact statement is rubbish.

Ms Albury-Colless: I completely agree with you. A completely independent, objective EIS is required.

Ms Pinkas: That is right.

Ms Albury-Colless: Divorce it from the developer.

THE CHAIR: Dr Watson has been waiting quite patiently.

Ms Pinkas: Sorry, but that is important.

Dr Watson: I want to make a point that as we expand across the border we need perhaps a more formal joint ACT, New South Wales and perhaps federal land use commission, an independent body, that can have oversight. Obviously we are expanding—not just in Ginninderra Falls but in all directions, particularly in the north, north-east and north-west. There is Albury-Wodonga and there are many other parts of the world where you have these borders and you have to get together. How can we do that? One more thing, for instance—and obviously you cannot leave it to Macquarie Street or the New South Wales government—is that it is 400,000 of us, more and more, who are in this region. Somehow we have to get some formal body that is independent to look at appropriate land use.

THE CHAIR: We are, unfortunately, out of time. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you all for appearing today. When available, a proof transcript will be forwarded to witnesses to provide an opportunity to check the transcript and identify any errors in transcription.

If witnesses undertook to provide further information or took questions on notice during the hearing, the committee does not have a deadline for receipt of responses; however, we would appreciate them as soon as possible. I do not think anyone took questions on notice but, Dr Watson, you were going to table a document, so could you just provide that document to us.

Short suspension.

COGHLAN, MRS ROBYN ISOBEL, Secretary, Friends of Hawker Village
DENHAM, DR DAVID, Public officer and committee member, Griffith and Narrabundah Community Association
FATSEAS, MS MAREA, Chair, Inner South Canberra Community Council
FOGERTY, DR JACQUELYN RUTH, Secretary, Hughes Residents Association
GINGELL, MRS CHRISTINE, Treasurer, Friends of Hawker Village
LEWIS, MR MICHAEL KENNETH, President, Yarralumla Residents Association
PATULNY, MS GLENYS, President, Tuggeranong Community Council
WILSON, DR GEORGE, President, Deakin Residents Association

THE CHAIR: We will now move to our second panel discussion. On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome Mike Lewis from Yarralumla Residents Association, Robyn Coghlan from Friends of Hawker Village, Marea Fatseas from Inner South Community Council, Dr David Denham from Griffith and Narrabundah Community Association, Dr Jacky Fogerty from Hughes Residents Association, Glenys Patulny from Tuggeranong Community Council and Dr George Wilson from Deakin Residents Association. Christine, you are not on my list, but you are also from Friends of Hawker Village?

Mrs Gingell: Correct.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for appearing today and for your written submissions to the inquiry. Also, thank you for your patience. I know we are running a little over time before we have even started. Can I remind all witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the pink-coloured privilege statement before you on the table. We do have only three; so I ask that you share those around. I think a few of you would have seen it before. Once everyone has had a moment to look at that, can I get you to confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement? Everyone has said yes.

Can I also remind witnesses that proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and are being webstreamed and broadcast live. Instead of going straight to questions, I think we have a few minutes for you to make a short statement. We might start with Jacky and work our way down the table.

Dr Fogerty: I have just noted that there are eight people, so I will cut mine in half.

THE CHAIR: I will just say that if you do have a statement you are also welcome to table that so that the committee can take it up afterwards.

Dr Fogerty: Thank you so much. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this important inquiry. Canberrans have expressed concerns for many years about the piecemeal and developer-led approach to urban development which allows precious green spaces to be encroached on and destroyed one by one. We were very pleased when the ACT government announced that it was developing an integrated plan for Red Hill nature reserve and surrounds to address this issue in one precious part of Canberra.

We commend the integrated plan team in the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, EPSDD, for their considered analysis of environmental and human issues in developing this integrated plan. This is the model we should follow, rather than allowing our green and public spaces to be eaten away block by block by uncoordinated proposals by developers. Better management of development and the interface with our natural environment cannot come without changes to current regulatory settings.

Currently, rigid processes and lack of coordination and transparency mean that decisions which destroy our environment can be taken without community knowledge or recourse. An excellent example is what happened while the integrated plan for Red Hill and surrounds was being developed. Having been assured that development on Red Hill woodland was on hold while this process was underway, we were dismayed to discover via a third party that a new development application had been lodged to build multistorey storage facilities on woodland specifically included in the integrated plan at section 66 Deakin. Advice from EPSDD was that they had no capacity to hold over this development application while the integrated plan was developed.

The development application documentation included a consultant environmental assessment that claimed that the land comprised degraded exotic vegetation. In fact, after their own ecologist inspected the site at our urging, EPSDD referred the development to the commonwealth for assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Meanwhile, on another part of Red Hill also explicitly included in the integrated plan, the Federal Golf Course developers had quietly applied to the ACT government conservator for a decision that their proposed development had no environmental impact. Despite our involvement in the integrated plan process and a previous community panel on this development, local community organisations only found out three months later, once again from a third party.

With this experience in mind, we ask the committee to consider our August 2018 submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly's inquiry into engagement with development application processes in the ACT. We particularly draw your attention to recommendations 5, 6, 8 and 9 on the need for integrated planning and better processes for development applications which affect environmentally sensitive areas and green space. We also note recommendations 14 and 15 on the need for genuinely independent and credible environmental assessment for development applications and recommendations 16 to 18 about improving protection for trees.

Thank you again for this opportunity. Our natural and cultural heritage, Canberra's sustainability and the future quality of life of its citizens depend on effectively managing the interface between our urban lives and our precious natural environment and ensuring that we have the policy and regulatory settings to support this.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to table that statement?

Dr Fogerty: I will table that. I am also tabling copies of our submissions to the inquiry.

Mr Lewis: Yarralumla residents appreciate the amount of natural environment in the suburb but would be concerned at the loss of any further open space. To achieve an appropriate and effective balance between urban development and nature, YRA considers that the first step is to develop a master plan or a precinct plan for each suburb, in consultation with the local community. We think the community consultation over the Yarralumla brickworks is a useful model.

The second step is to provide sufficient resources—that is, people and money—to actually implement the plan. We do not want master plans, for example, sitting around on a shelf. The third step is to allocate sufficient resources to maintain any infrastructure or open space developed as part of a plan or to protect any endangered species. In our experience, insufficient resources have been allocated in this area. The final step is to allocate sufficient resources to actually enforce the building and planning rules. This requires a political willingness which, sadly, has been absent in recent years.

In terms of suggestions for infrastructure to improve the environment, YRA suggests the construction of the Yarralumla Bay wetlands. This was first suggested in the Yarralumla Bay master plan developed by the NCA in 2009. The aim is to convert two concrete stormwater drains into a wetland. Given that the NCA is responsible for water quality in Lake Burley Griffin, costs could possibly be shared between the ACT and the commonwealth.

As far as policy hindering an effective mix of urban development and nature is concerned, YRA and, I notice, many other submissions have noted the residential zoning policy and/or regulations that result in large houses on small blocks with no room for large, shady trees and adequate permeable surfaces. Finally, in considering nature and the needs of citizens, YRA would urge the committee not to overlook issues associated with noise pollution.

Ms Fatseas: Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence at your hearings today. The Inner South Canberra Community Council is the peak body representing residents groups in the inner south, including Yarralumla Residents Association, Deakin Residents Association, and Griffith Narrabundah Community Association, who are also giving evidence today.

In the interests of time, I am just going to focus on the recommendations in the submission. There are nine, and I will go through them. The first recommendation is:

The ISCCC seeks ongoing ACT Government commitment, including in cooperation with the Commonwealth, to protect and maintain key natural environment areas in the Inner South, especially the Red Hill Nature Reserve, Stirling Park and Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

The second recommendation is:

That a stocktake of key existing green (natural) infrastructure be compiled as well as a strategy for maintaining it.

The third is:

That the ACT Government support a long-term strategy, in consultation with the community, for funding the maintenance of Canberra's open spaces and nature reserves.

The fourth is:

That the ACT Government assist local volunteer groups that help to maintain urban trees and high value open spaces and reserves, for example through support for training, materials and other costs.

The fifth is:

That up-to-date Conservation Management Plans be in place and adhered to in relation to proposed development on Lake Burley Griffin and foreshores.

The sixth is:

That the development codes for residential housing be amended so that at least 35-40 per cent of residential lots are covered by permeable surfaces to enable the planting of shade trees and other vegetation and that this Rule be mandatory.

The seventh is:

That the ACT Government resource community consultation on suburban precinct codes, in particular those suburbs under development pressure.

Just reinforcing the point that Mike made before. Recommendation eight is:

That developers and builders in Canberra be held accountable by government agencies for the protection of verges and street trees, perhaps through on-the-spot fines by rangers, or bonds that are returned after construction completion if there has been compliance with imposed conditions.

And, finally:

That the ACT Government's review of its Planning Strategy 2012 evaluates the extent to which biodiversity/wildlife corridors are being maintained, and ensures the continuation of such corridors in future.

Dr Denham: Thank you again for the opportunity to come here this afternoon. Marea had I do not know how many recommendations. Eight was it? I am only going to have five, madam chair, but I might take a little longer over each one.

Our association is focused on maintaining the garden city environment. We will not go to Namadgi and Tidbinbilla. What we are focusing on today is the garden city environment. There are two areas, the residential areas and the urban parks with street trees and verges.

If we go to the urban parks, street trees and verges, we have three recommendations

here. One is that the government should invest more to tackle environmental issues and protect nature reserves. I was very interested to look at the government's submission to this inquiry. It says:

As part of the 2018-19 Budget, the Government has committed more than \$12 million over four years, to tackle environmental issues and protect nature reserves.

\$3 million a year for a city that occupies more than 500 square kilometres does not appear to be enough to me. When you look around the city and you see the sad state of our dying and dead trees, that confirms that we need more resources on that.

The second one is that, with climate change, we need to reassess, as a matter of urgency, which species of trees we plant. That was brought out in the last session as well; this emphasises that. And how are we going to maintain them until they are established? What happens now is that the contractor goes out and plants the trees; sometimes they are watered and sometimes they are not; and quite a high percentage of them die. We need a biodiversity situation with the trees.

The third one is the minutiae one, but it should be done because this applies to verges and trees on verges. In 2012—that is a long time ago—we approached the then Chief Minister and said, “City Services”—TAMS as they were then—“are not advised of DA-exempt knockdowns and rebuilds. They do not know that the verge is going to be trampled on, that the trees on the verges might be damaged.” She wrote back in very nice words saying, “I am going to get my senior bureaucrats to look at this,” blah, blah, blah. You guessed it: nothing has happened. It should not be difficult for the certifier to just advise city services: “I have a knockdown-rebuild.” It should not be difficult. Unless something has happened in the last month, we are still back in 2012.

I have done three of them. There are two of them left now. Then I will finish. In the garden city, we estimate that in Griffith, one suburb, 20,000 square metres of planting areas or more has been lost in the last 20 years. It is all more and more concrete. We are being engulfed by concrete. That is not what we need as a garden city.

We are recommending that the current mandatory plot ratio rule be thrown out. Nobody knows why it is there. You can comply with the rule and 90 per cent of the plot can be covered with swimming pools, patios, concrete and all the rest of it. This is strong support for Marea's recommendation of at least 35 per cent. Gee, we are consistent. That should be replaced as a mandatory rule—none of this criteria business where you can decide, “Maybe it is all right today but it will not be tomorrow.” It is the planting area itself, and that is the only way we can maintain trees.

The final one will be a bit more controversial. I noticed that Jack Kershaw's submission says:

... dual occupancies kill the important interlinking swathe of nature that is the backyard environment.

What happened with Mr Fluffy? Random blocks all the way around, little pockets of RZ2 invading the garden city, RZ1. We do not think that there should be any more RZ2 pockets in RZ1. If we want to have intensity of dwellings, which we probably

have to do if we are going to be a more compact city, then we should do that by rezoning so that the people who are in the zone know what they want. If I buy a block and live there, I want to know what I am going to be up for next door and with my neighbours. I have said enough. Thank you very much for listening.

Ms Patulny: I want to start by reading something from *Place-based sustainable urban renewal*. A few years ago the University of Canberra did a study on Tuggeranong and produced a report called *Place-based sustainable urban renewal: a case study of the Tuggeranong District, Australian Capital Territory*. It says that residents greatly value the natural environment and access to visual amenity, with suburbs where the green spaces, ease of access to nature and appreciation of the natural environment and the overall “bush feel” were considered central to the identity of those places.

That has been reinforced. Last year I attended five days of the better suburbs forum. We identified five areas in municipal services. The top two priorities were water and trees. This is the general community, and they thought about water and trees. Without them we are going to lose not just our identity but our healthy way of life.

That leads on to a whole lot of stuff which is reiterated in housing collaboration, which I think is where Marea and I got 35 per cent. Now, in places like Molonglo, we are getting small blocks of land with huge houses and no space for putting any trees around. With all the climate change that is happening and the heat effect, trees can make a difference of 15 degrees to the local area.

We have to look at our planning, and we have to incorporate into our planning the quadruple bottom line: the cultural and the environmental as well as the economic and the social. We really need to look at that when we are looking at these big lots of developments so that we are not approving these sorts of things, so that we have to put appropriate trees in. It is really critical. We need to look at our planning so that these things are taken into consideration before these whole areas are released.

I think there is a place for infill. We need to look at better infill, but better infill that still allows greenery and appropriate building. My son in Sydney lived in a huge block, but basically it was like a horseshoe. In the middle was a little park and a swimming pool. And there was underground parking. We just have huge blocks side by side by side. We need to have overall better design that incorporates nature in an appropriate way.

Dr Wilson: Our submission was drafted by our secretary, Helen Allnutt, who is unwell. I just wanted to note that. Garden city planning principles are a key part of everything that we are interested in for Deakin Residents Association. We note the pressures for a rapidly growing population and the ACT’s relatively small revenue base—rates, land sales, and property development—and the need for the government to fund some costly infrastructure projects such as the light rail. Inner suburbs such as Deakin are particularly affected by revenue-raising policy for infill and densification to meet these demands.

As an older suburb, Deakin is currently fortunate in its residential amenity: wide, tree-lined streets, mature gardens and proximity to employment hubs. We also have

several schools; a commercial medical precinct; national institutions, including the Mint and the Lodge; and many embassies.

Having made those general remarks, I want to focus on four things: nature strips and parking; the Red Hill nature reserve and other parks and green space; the consequences of lack of enforcement, in our view, of renovation development regulations; and emissions targets and transport.

Going to nature strips and parking, vibrant nature strips and trees are a quintessential component of the garden city, and its strongest natural asset. Traffic flows through Deakin are increasing, particularly on Kent Street and Hopetoun Circuit. While some increases are locally generated, there is increased office and hospital development traffic flowing to west Deakin. Off-street parking is increasing—this is the key thing I want to get to—on these transit roads. Consequently, residents are parking on the nature strip. And tradesmen do it as a matter of habit; their four-wheel drives make it very easy for them. Except where paid parking and other restrictions are in place, the ACT government does not enforce regulations about parking on nature strips. Consequently, we have significant tree death, death of other vegetation, soil compaction and the soil erosion that is following.

Going to nature reserves, parks and green space, Deakin is the home of the northern portion of the Red Hill nature reserve. It is part of the Canberra Nature Park, a very important part of the Canberra landscape, highly significant for its historical value and recreational enjoyment for both Deakin and other residents. It is also a major tourist attraction. Collaboration between the ACT parks and conservation service and the Red Hill Regeneration Group is excellent and a great model. DRA welcomes the recent moratorium that was put in place that Jacky and others referred to.

We also have a number of other parks—Latrobe Park, the Lodge park, Rosemary Dobson Park—and other sporting ovals and areas near the Mint and at the back of the Deakin shops. Latrobe Park recently had its electric barbecues removed and seating was replaced without any consultation with or reference to the local community. An ageing concrete toilet block was replaced with a modern one, decommissioned but again without any consultation. I must say, though, that we are very pleased to see that the government is planning to spend some money on certain aspects of renewal in Latrobe Park.

David has referred to existing plot ratios. This is a real problem in Deakin as well. It leads to blocks occupying the area completely, wall to wall, and the removal of vegetation and soft landscaping around them. We would like to see those sorts of things looked at more closely and regulations enforced.

Of course, these policies also have an effect on the capacity of the ACT to meet its emission reduction targets, which I must say are very good. We are concerned that these activities that are taking place do not support the capacity of the ACT to meet those emission reduction targets.

DRA would like to see a fully integrated public transport study conducted that links buses and bikeways and that is fully compatible with the garden city values. We wondered only yesterday what might have happened if \$200 million had been spent

on improved bikeways in the ACT. It might have been a substantial improvement.

We are also a bit concerned about the various inquiries that are underway and how this one might link to the others that are in place. It is very important that those synergies take place.

In summary, people in other Australian cities and other parts of the world envy much of what we have in Canberra and the ACT. DRA believes that the aim should be to safeguard the special and unique features of Canberra, in particular its garden city values and principles, as well as the status of the bush capital. These features should be protected, maintained and enhanced, not destroyed. DRA is concerned that the needs and interests of developers sometimes take precedence over these sorts of values. We trust that with proper and balanced planning and management, our aims can be achieved. The last thing we want is for Canberra to become just like everywhere else.

THE CHAIR: Robyn and Christine, do you have a joint statement or individual ones?

Mrs Coghlan: Two very short ones.

THE CHAIR: Go ahead.

Mrs Coghlan: The Friends of Hawker Village represents the four catchment suburbs of Hawker, Weetangera, Page and Scullin. We back on to the Pinnacle nature reserve, so we have considerable interest in this hearing.

We also support everything that has been said by all the other people at this table. I will not belabour those points. We believe that the garden city concept has been vital to the success of Canberra as the bush capital, for two reasons. Firstly, it recognises the different climatic conditions of this location, with its greater extremes of temperature than in coastal cities. The vegetation cover provided by backyards and so forth contributes to reducing the heat island effect.

Secondly, it has provided an urban cover that connects the surrounding nature reserves. The ACT is blessed with nature reserves around and throughout the built-up area, but these are fragmented and need connection for worthwhile preservation of the wildlife. Unfortunately, there is a lack of adequate funding for maintenance of nature parks and local parks, so that they are becoming weed infested and eroded along walking tracks.

Street and garden trees and grass provide shade in summer and ameliorate temperatures, as well as supporting various native species. They are also maintained by owners, not at the public expense. This role is threatened by the increasing loss of adequate space for shade trees and other greenery on blocks. Current planning rules have virtually extinguished backyards in new suburbs, and in parts of older suburbs designated for densification.

The footprint of most houses tends to be so large that the remaining setbacks are too narrow to effectively support nature and usually just increase the amount of hard

surface on the block. We support the earlier comments that there needs to be a dramatic change in the way the Territory Plan regulates the redevelopment of blocks and the creation of new suburbs.

It is imperative that ACT planning be designed for local conditions, not copied from coastal cities or other places overseas that do not have a similar climate. Green infrastructure, in particular, will be more difficult to maintain satisfactorily in this climate, especially with future global warming. I reiterate what has been said before: the current planning structure does not serve us well for the future.

Mrs Gingell: My focus is as a resident of Weetangera in the RZ2 zone and what I have seen over the last few years when the large blocks with large trees have been developed. It seems to me that both the conservator and the planning authority permit the removal of trees and large shrubs from blocks undergoing development far too easily. Under current arrangements, despite what the conservator may say, the planning authority can convene a meeting of its own staff and decide that trees can go. I do not consider that to be acceptable. The usual reason they give for their decision is “no other design option available”, just because they will not say that you must have one less unit, a smaller development or make one unit smaller so that the tree can stay.

The value given to what I would call conifers—I do not know the scientific names—is zero. In Weetangera we have quite a lot of plantings of conifers. I see them around Canberra in all sorts of places. I do not know whether they are original ones from farmland properties or whether they have been planted. Certainly, in the Weetangera park in Smith Street they were planted after World War I to recognise the contribution of locals to the war effort.

I do not think we should be saying that conifers do not suit Canberra and that we should chop them all down. When they are replaced, as I think the previous panel suggested, you need a proper reason for the type of tree or the mix of trees that you have. But I do not think we should be chopping down healthy trees just to satisfy the greed of developers.

I would like to reiterate the points made by others regarding the little bit of space that gets left on a block when it is redeveloped. The plot ratio does not sufficiently protect space. It is the 40 per cent open space which protects that. At the moment it is 40 per cent excluding driveways. I would suggest that that should also be 40 per cent excluding enclosed private open spaces, because, to all intents and purposes, an enclosed private open space can just be tiles or tanbark, and there is no space for a significant tree of any kind. The criteria for that need to go. In a block consolidation in my street, 200 square metres of open space was thrown away. It was upheld on appeal that it could go. The developer was allowed to have far less than the 40 per cent.

Other people have spoken about verges and verge trees. They are not properly protected, as the rules are not enforced regarding parking on verges. We also have it on median strips in our area.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will go to Miss Burch.

MISS C BURCH: We have heard a lot about the piecemeal approach to development and lack of strategic approach when it comes to development and planning processes. We heard from the last panel a couple of suggestions around needing independent environmental impact statements. I think you have all touched on the need for more enforcement and compliance. I am interested in other ideas or ways that you think those processes need to be improved to more greatly facilitate nature in our city.

Ms Fatseas: Back in 2013 the ACT government undertook, in response to draft variation 306 to the Territory Plan, to establish precinct codes for every suburb in Canberra, which it proceeded to do, but it also undertook to consult with communities about character statements for each suburb. In other words, the expectation was that there would be community consultation on the character of the suburbs that was valued and that would be incorporated in a precinct code which has the force of law. That never happened. That is a major concern.

If we had a more strategic approach, and we had community engagement on the character of their suburb and what people's vision was for their suburb going forward, I think you could encapsulate that in a strategic plan. You would get more support, probably, from both residents and developers because everybody would know where they stand.

Ms Patulny: We have master plans and precinct codes. Sometimes there needs to be a more holistic overview. We originally had the Griffin plan, which was holistic. We seem to have lost a lot of that and we have not replaced it with any overview. They look at this little bit and that little bit. What about the in-betweens? We need to have a more connected, integrated development process.

THE CHAIR: I am not sure if you were here earlier but we did put it to the earlier panel that AILA, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, in their submission raised the need for a landscape plan for Canberra. Would you consider that—

Ms Patulny: That needs to be part of the general planning process. All too often it comes up very nicely, but if they do not look at it properly and take those things into consideration, you will have problems. For example, Lake Tuggeranong at the moment is a mass of blue-green algae. It looked nice on the plan, but it was too small for its area, and now it is suffering because you have a big lot of development around it. It should have been a bigger lake for the amount of development around it. That was many years ago, but it is an example. If you do not do it right, you are going to have problems further down the track.

THE CHAIR: Would anyone else like to add anything?

Dr Wilson: I want to pick up on something that the ISCCC said before, and that was to establish an independent planning authority that would report directly to the Legislative Assembly. The body would include suitably qualified professionals with expertise and experience in town planning matters, and the enforcement of planning and building regulations would be transferred to that body.

Mr Lewis: For example, in Yarralumla recently they did the environmental impact study on the upgrade to Dudley Street. We are concerned about that as we think it is a

waste of money. It does not actually need to be done. It is also destroying quite a lot of golden sun moth habitat. You have a situation where the ACT government makes the recommendation on the environmental impact statement on one of their own projects. There is no transparency there. The ACT government is approving its own projects, with no independent scrutiny and no transparency. That is of concern.

Dr Denham: I would like to say a little bit about compliance, which has been brought up. One of the problems is that we have Access Canberra, which is looking after all of the compliance, and it is separated from the directorates that bring in the legislation for all of that. For example, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development would look at the Territory Plan, the precinct codes and the rules for building and planning, but if anything goes wrong, you are supposed to go through Access Canberra. And there is not time because they do not always have the expertise within that group. That is all within the other directorate. The Access people do not have time to do anything.

There is also the time taken to get any decisions. Robyn had a very good letter in the *Canberra Times* about footpaths recently, where it took about a year. Last August I put in a request for a bit of a footpath, about 2½ metres by one metre. “Yes, here’s the work order for this to be done.” “Excellent; it’s going to be fixed.” Guess what? As with the 2012 letter, nothing has happened. Nobody gets back to you to say why it has not been done, because that is in the city services group. They probably say, “This isn’t high priority.” I think that some reorganisation of compliance would be very useful.

THE CHAIR: The garden city has come up quite a bit, and its importance, especially given the suburbs that quite a few of the groups represent. We also received a submission from Ken Taylor, who has written quite extensively on the garden city and the city within the landscape. I want to put a line from this to you and get your views on it. Ken Taylor writes:

At this stage in the city’s history what is needed is for the landscape ethos of the city to be reimaged and applied rather than ignored.

He then goes on to talk about the change from low density to medium and high density and how it is not necessarily about one or the other; it is about making sure that you leave space for everything. Given that there have been some very strong views on the garden city, and also noting the conversations we had previously, where do we go with the landscape in the city? Is it about preserving what we have always had or do you see room for change? What would you like to see incorporated in that?

Dr Fogerty: I think we all see room for change, and I think we all see room for densification. What worries us is what is happening, for instance, to Woden town centre currently—2,000 people per hectare. In Sydney 600 people per hectare is classed as high density. We are talking about 2,000 if they approve the development applications that they currently have, without any that might come on stream.

Woden town centre used to be a green area. With the light rail coming, there will be a lot more infrastructure. We are down to one oval, one cemetery and one skate park with a barbecue and a stagnant pond. That is it, for all those people in Woden town

centre. How will the children get to a green place to play? I do not understand it. How will the old people go for a nice walk? That is not how we want to live in Canberra.

Mr Lewis: Everybody recognises that, yes, we need to increase the density. The key is to consult with people. The locals know the local area best; they know what will work and what will not work, and they know what impact it will have on them. The key point is that, if you are going to increase density, you need to consult and listen to the consultation. Do not just go through the motions; actually take on board what people are saying.

Ms Fatseas: I want to point to the Canberra Urban and Regional Futures report on living green infrastructure. They highlighted international examples of higher density being done well, together with more green infrastructure. They referenced Lisbon, Barcelona and Singapore. It is a question of building on what we have, and the advantages that we already have in Canberra, whereas it seems almost as though there is a bit of a cringe—that it is a bit old hat and that we should be moving to be like other cities.

It is a very strange kind of mentality—instead of looking at us having this great advantage and at how we can build on it. For example, Barcelona is now having to retrofit a whole lot of street trees into the landscape, and we are talking about getting rid of them, by virtue of the fact that we are not looking after our street trees. We have to stop trying to imagine that Canberra is not as good as other cities. We should take our garden city character and build on it to create something better that will have higher density and will also have fantastic green living infrastructure.

Ms Patulny: We need to look at the future, and the future is not just the big plot of land and the big house. We need to look at the mix—the infill, the medium, townhouses as well as ordinary houses. We need to have a better mix. We also need to improve our standards so that, when we have high rise, it is quality high rise with trees around it and places where kids can go and play. The whole area should be designed so that there are appropriate parks, shading and that sort of stuff.

We need to raise our standards and we need better design. We need to have better checking, to make sure that it is built to standards, and we need to have follow-up, to make sure that these are maintained. It can be done by the government or by the community. If the community do it, they need to be like land carers: they need to be supported so that the community can get more and more involved. There is a whole process but a lot of it is about starting off with the will to do something.

Dr Wilson: I would like to re-emphasise the street trees issue. I mentioned the excellent example in Red Hill, where ACT parks and con has collaborated for many years with the Red Hill Regenerators, to great effect. I am wondering whether that model cannot be more widely applied, including, say, in La Trobe Park. We are in the process of establishing the Friends of La Trobe Park group at the moment. We have a cadre of people ready to work with the agency that is appropriate to improve the nature values of the park. I would like to support that.

The big problem we have right now is that nearly all the trees outside the Deakin shops are very stressed; some of them are dead. We have tried to have something

done about it and it just seems to go through to the keeper. It would appear that there are not sufficient resources in the government agency that is responsible for this to be able to do anything about it. That is just not good enough, in my view, in the garden city.

Mrs Coghlan: I agree with the previous speakers. We definitely need to have a better examination of what kinds of buildings and what kinds of spaces will be viable in the future. We know our future is changing; we know we are going to have to deal with much more severe summers and much more severe downpours. We need to make sure that we are building what will work in 50 years time, before they are knocked down again.

The other issue that is of particular concern is the lack of funding for maintenance of all of this green infrastructure. One way of achieving some progress is to involve the communities. First of all, they should be educated on the need to maintain their nature strips. They need to understand that putting gravel on your nature strip is not environmentally friendly. There is a reason for grass being preferable and for maintaining a decent backyard, which many people do not understand.

If they are given the incentive to look after their backyards and their nature strips, people will do it, but a lot of people are not that way inclined. They need to understand the need for it. In the process, if community groups could be organised to help look after some of the public infrastructure, like the groups do in the nature parks, that would also be of benefit. That might require some change to the legislation to make sure that private citizens who water a park or do some weeding cannot be liable if someone comes along and does something silly and hurts themselves. It is complicated, I know, but we need to look for different resources to compensate for the fact that the money to maintain all of these resources is not there.

Dr Wilson: By way of a supplementary comment, how many people are aware that a tree program is still in place from the Yarralumla Nursery? It is possible for people to get trees and plant them. It was common knowledge years ago, but I wonder whether it still is.

THE CHAIR: It is a good question. From my own experience as a member for Yerrabi and living in quite a fast-growing region, we do make a point of letting people know about it. I know the mingle program, which is run through the Suburban Land Agency, has been doing a lot of work on letting people know it is there. I think there is a little bit of difference between knowing it is there and going and acting on it. Maybe we could get a few more people enthused about it.

Mrs Gingell: I want to make a comment about kids in apartments needing play spaces. One of the wonderful things about Canberra was that young families could have their own play space which was secure and safe. Over the last 40 years, whether it is real or only perceived, people have become absolutely phobic about letting their kids go off to play. There is no way young children who want to play in green spaces can be unsupervised. I think the emphasis should be on the fact that people who want a secure backyard space should be able to afford it. I do not think many people with children would live in apartments by choice.

THE CHAIR: We might have to wrap it up there. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you all for appearing today. When available, a copy of the proof transcript will be forwarded to witnesses, to provide an opportunity to check the transcript and identify any errors in transcription. If witnesses undertook to provide further information or took questions on notice, whilst we do not have a set deadline for responses, we would appreciate receiving them within one week of this hearing.

TAYLOR, PROFESSOR KEN

THE CHAIR: I welcome the next witness, Professor Ken Taylor. On behalf of the committee, thank you for appearing today and for your written submission to the inquiry. I remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the pink privilege statement before you on the table. Can you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Prof Taylor: I do.

THE CHAIR: I remind you that proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes and are being webstreamed and broadcast live. Before we proceed to questions from the committee, would you like to make an opening statement?

Prof Taylor: No.

THE CHAIR: We will go straight to questions. Many of the submissions have noted the high value attached to the garden city quality of the ACT. In your opinion, how can we work to maintain the quality alongside ongoing population growth and development?

Prof Taylor: I should say that I am appearing for myself, as an author of a 2006 book on Canberra.

Going to the garden city notion, first of all, let me say that Walter Burley Griffin's plan was not a garden city plan. I do get tired of reading that in the *Canberra Times*. It was a city beautiful plan with garden city overtones. Basically, it was one with what we see now in the centre of Canberra, with the big axes, avenues, radial areas and so on. And it was one with views in and out of the city. I think that is important; it is important now. As I walked from the ANU, I looked again and the view of City Hill is disappearing. I have written about this many times.

One of the underlying elements of the Canberra plan, all the way through until self-government, was maintaining the views to the surrounding hills. It is important. In China, in I think the Ming dynasty, people were asked to specify their favourite views in cities, and they were protected. They do the same in Vancouver. We used to do it here, but it is disappearing. We cannot keep all the views, but that is part of the garden city notion.

The other part of the garden city notion came about because, when Griffin left in 1921, John Sulman took over on the basis that if he took over as secretary of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee he would get a knighthood. Two years later he had not got it, so he wrote to whoever and said, "May I remind you." These are all anecdotes of Canberra which I think make it an interesting place.

It was John Sulman who introduced the garden city notion. He had come from Britain, and he worked on garden city places in Sydney before he came here. He suited the

Australian psyche at the time. It was mainly detached housing. But the garden city concept is not limited to low density detached or semidetached housing. It does include, in some countries—including parts of Sydney that I could take you to—examples of what are not called garden cities but that are, because they live up to the idea of the built area within a landscape setting, even if it is only street trees.

I am passionately of the view that it is contact with—let us call it nature—vegetation and green space that makes cities memorable. If you go to Zurich, what do you remember about Zurich? The open space system that comes in from the hills right down around to the lake. There is Kyoto in Japan. There are lots of examples of this around the world. But Canberra was the place de rigueur for this. We are losing it.

The garden city idea was actually a social notion when it first started; it was not a planning notion. Ebenezer Howard was not a planner, but he saw the need for people in industrial cities in England, where I am originally from. I grew up in what one would now regard as a filthy slum area, so I know what I am talking about. People needed access to open space and fresh air. And we still do, increasingly. With climate change, the fact that we are losing more trees now than we are planting is alarming for this city. I cannot put it any other way.

The garden city notion does involve high densities, as long as there is open space. Helsinki is another place. If you go to Helsinki and Zurich and look at some of the public housing from the 50s and 60s in those cities, there is landscape—public, private and semiprivate—everywhere. You feel as though you are moving through a skeleton of open space which then connects to bigger open spaces.

It is not just the hills and ridges. If I may go to one of my hobbyhorses, the misnamed Canberra Nature Park, the national capital open space system, its origin really is in Griffin's idea of not building on the hills and so on. It was cemented in place by the NCDC, that organisation that we are not supposed to mention. They saw landscape as the primary element in the planning of the city. This is why we have got much of the city as it is now. What you get is this integrated open space system.

In the 1960s, as I remember, because I was working and then teaching in England in those days, there was an idea that came from America. I worked at Manchester city planning authority and I changed from town planning to landscape and worked on the open space policy system for the city, where we were reclaiming river valleys, canals and so on. The idea was to get an open space backbone or skeleton for the city.

I came to Canberra in 1975. And here it is, as it should be. You get these fingers of open space coming down from the hills and ridges. They come in through the neighbourhood parks, the district parks, public places like schools and into the streets, through the street tree planting. But integral to that is open space in the residential areas. That is what we are now losing.

I did talk to Ben Ponton about this some months ago, and I am hoping that the new design review panel and the new City Renewal Authority will get things onto a better keel. I do not know whether they will. As I said, the best thing that happened to Canberra in a long time was to get rid of the unlamented LDA and replace them. I am hoping that, with some of the high density developments along Northbourne, we will

see open space involved. I have to say that I am not quite sure where it is all up to.

Where the Northbourne flats were—I did work on the conservation of those some years ago with people from Sydney, looking at how it would be possible to increase the density there, keeping some of the housing—the important thing was the open spaces: the little courtyards, the semi-public ones and also larger ones with some very good tree planting in them. I remember with horror when the site was sold and I saw a sketch of the plan. I refer to it as Fort Northbourne, just a continual line of development along Northbourne Avenue, with no ways through. The then proposed developer said, “We will not be keeping these. We will plant some more trees.” I hope that with the new renewal authority we are past that sort of thing.

One more thing I will mention is the reference to urban villages. I wrote a piece in the *Canberra Times* two or three years ago not criticising them but asking, “What do you mean by urban villages?” It is almost a contradiction in terms. If you think about a village—with the village green, the trees and the tree planting, where you would be dancing around a maypole—it is that sort of image. It is possible to do that in cities, but we have not been doing it.

THE CHAIR: How do we start doing it?

MISS C BURCH: Or, to ask a similar question, why or how do you think the current process or system is failing?

Prof Taylor: I am sorry; I am having difficulty hearing.

MISS C BURCH: Talking about the fact that we are losing the open space and green space in residential areas and the views around our city, why or how do you think the current process or system is failing that is resulting in that?

Prof Taylor: Because there have not been reasonable, tight design guidelines. I now see that the City Renewal Authority is talking of design guidelines. It is design guidelines. Previously—I am sorry, but I shall say it—it was just leaving it, open slather, to a developer. A developer put in a proposal and came back a couple of months later with increased density. Developers were getting away with doing whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, wherever they wanted. A lot of us kept complaining about that, but it was planning on land on economic grounds. Okay, we need the money; we have to do something. But it is about trying to get a balance.

I am not against increased densities. What I want is good planning, with open space and tree planting. It is not only about the sustainability aspects—I hate that word—of the city, with climate change; it is also for cultural sustainability, for making people feel that they belong to a city that might try to remain a city not like any other.

THE CHAIR: My follow-on question from that, because I think Miss C Burch took a back step, is: how do we get that back? How do we start planning for the future? The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects have suggested a landscape plan for Canberra. Do you have a view on that?

Prof Taylor: A landscape plan?

THE CHAIR: Yes. That has been suggested by AILA, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

Prof Taylor: I used to be a fellow. I resigned a few years ago. I will not say why. In fact, I was president of the institute at one stage. Back in the days when Simon Corbell was in the seat, he had a proposal for a landscape plan for the city and looking at a review of all the open space. I do not think we need another review of the open space but we do need a landscape policy for this city, not just an architectural policy or a building policy. The real zeitgeist of this city is the landscape, the landscape setting. It always has been. It is still there, but it is being eaten away, and we cannot just rely on the inner hills and ridges to maintain that.

THE CHAIR: What would you see as the key components of the Canberra landscape? You have made reference to hills, ridges, trees. Is there anything else that you would add?

Prof Taylor: Yes: the local parks, district parks, schools, private open spaces like golf courses and then the incidental bits that are left over. The NCDC were very good at that, at keeping a group of trees on a street corner. Now they have stopped doing that. You go around the 60 suburbs and look at the number of trees where the design was done around them. We cannot keep them all, but I just do not think we are thinking sufficiently. Then there are the street trees and the trees in people's gardens, whether it is detached housing or whether it is medium density housing with open space involved.

I just happened to look up this morning that new development in Red Hill, the Parks, and it seems to me that that development is going to take the path that I am talking about, where open space is an important part of the spatial development. It is the spaces between buildings that we, as residents of cities, actually notice. A well-known planner back in the 60s did some work in Boston with little mud maps, asking people, "How do you guide your way through the city?" It was the things that they remembered and the spaces, even if it was a street space.

Buildings tend to meld into the background, which takes me back to my earlier point about the importance of the views into and out of Canberra. That would be part of an overall landscape plan. Let us look, before it is too late, at what are the major views. Go back to Griffin's contour map. He did work on what could be major and minor axes into and out of the city. We need to go back to that. We have lost it in Civic now.

The first nail in the coffin of this was actually in the NCDC days, towards its end, when they built across Ainslie Avenue. That was a really awful thing to do. I think the people that did it now regret it. I do not know whether I am making sense, but to me—

THE CHAIR: I know we are a bit over time. We did start a bit late. I might ask just one more question. You have noted the Indigenous population and we certainly have had people submit to the inquiry saying, "Do not forget the importance of landscape within the local Aboriginal community." We have had a lot of people refer to the Burley Griffin plan. The question that I put to other groups today and that I would like

to put to you is: how do we incorporate these different histories of landscape and move forward as the city develops? Just quickly.

Prof Taylor: How do we do it? By keeping in mind that the real feeling of Canberra is its landscape setting. I keep saying it, but that is what it is. Landscape articulates the city form. It is becoming less and less so, but we need to keep that in mind. We should be proud of the fact that for generations we have been known as a city not like any other.

Now, I am sorry to say, we are getting developers coming in from Melbourne saying, “We are going to make you like Melbourne.” We do not want to be like Melbourne. If we did, we would go and live there. I cannot think of anywhere worse, actually. Or Sydney! Sydney is terrific because of the harbour. But the real sense of place, the genius loci of Canberra, is: “Look out there! Don’t you appreciate what you have in this little courtyard?” Do I need to say anything more?

The other thing is that a few years ago there was the urban forest renewal program, from 2008-10. It was an expert panel and I was on it. Unfortunately, the panel was disbanded. Jon Stanhope disbanded it. He got fed up with people complaining about what was happening to their street trees. But at least we were getting somewhere. The person who was in charge of it was looking suburb by suburb and doing a plan and forward planning. We need to know what are the important elements now and what we have got left of the open space system in Canberra.

We know about the national capital open space. It should be inviolable. In the past people have talked about building on it, on the hills. We need an inventory of what we have got. Then, in the new development, we need to incorporate these sorts of ideas. Do you want to live in a multistorey development where you just look down and see bitumen and a car park? No. There are some wonderful examples, particularly in Europe, of this sort of development with trees. Even where my daughter lives, on the lower east side in Manhattan, not far from the poor area where a lot of African-Americans live, the amount of tree planting that is going on in that city is phenomenal. What do we do? We are losing trees.

THE CHAIR: On that note, unless there is anything you would like to add, we might leave it there, considering that we are quite a bit over time. Thank you very much, on behalf of the committee, for appearing today. When available, a proof transcript will be forwarded to you to provide an opportunity to check the transcript and identify any errors. I do not believe that there are any questions on notice. With that, the hearing is now adjourned. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all the witnesses who appeared today, even though they have all run off. The next hearing on nature in our city will take place two weeks from now, on 27 March.

Prof Taylor: Thank you for having me. I used to do this regularly.

The committee adjourned at 5.16 pm.