



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN  
RENEWAL**

(Reference: [Inquiry into draft variation to the Territory Plan No 329: Weston Group Centre and surrounding community and leisure and accommodation lands: zone changes and amendments to the Weston precinct map and code](#))

**Members:**

**MS C LE COUTEUR (Chair)**  
**MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)**  
**MS T CHEYNE**  
**MS N LAWDER**  
**MR J MILLIGAN**

**PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2017**

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**Secretary to the committee:**

**Ms Annemieke Jongsma (Ph: 620 51253)**

**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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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

**The committee met at 11.48 am.**

**TAYLOR, MS AIMEE**, Development Executive, Scentre Group Development and Asset Management, Scentre Management Ltd

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal inquiry into the draft variation to the Territory Plan No 329: Weston group centre and surrounding community and leisure and accommodation lands: zone changes and amendments to the Weston precinct map and code. I draw your attention to the pink card; it is the privilege statement. Can you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes, confirmed.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Before we go to questions, do you have an opening statement?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes. Scentre Group is a major stakeholder within the Belconnen and Woden town centres. With its shopping centre developments being the retail focal point in both of these locations, it has a particular interest in ensuring that the scale and types of developments permitted in different areas of Canberra are carefully considered in the interests of the town centres as a whole. Additionally, Scentre Group wishes to ensure that any variations to the Territory Plan will provide a benefit to the community while maintaining the intentions of the Territory Plan and a zone hierarchy system both in the present and in the future.

The proposed draft variation seeks to significantly extend CZ1, the commercial core zone, to the east of Weston group centre to permit future expansion. The extension proposed by the draft variation is achieved by rezoning an area of approximately 12½ thousand PRZ1 open space and CFC community facility zone to CZ1. However, this is a 50 per cent increase in the current area for the CZ1 core zone.

Furthermore, the draft variation proposes additional amendments to the Weston precinct map and code, with the changes of particular concern being the proposal to increase building heights. Should the draft variation be passed, these sites, if developed to their full potential, could allow for an additional 37,000 square metre GFA. Such an expansion would significantly increase the competition for the retail offerings in the surrounding areas and detract from the primary town centres and the planned retail hierarchy within the area. Therefore, Scentre Group disagrees entirely with these proposals on the basis that retail intensification in group centres is not consistent with the principles and intentions set out under ruling parts of the Territory Plan that are not being varied; nor is it consistent under the overarching National Capital Plan.

Under the National Capital Plan the ACT is separated into two distinct townships. The National Capital Plan recognises the importance of having one town centre as the focal point for each township, along with the importance of maintaining the integrity and the hierarchy. The National Capital Plan clearly stipulates that a hierarchy of centres will be maintained and that, in this hierarchy of centres, each town will have a

centre as the focal point for higher order retail functions, commercial services, offices, and community facilities, most importantly. The National Capital Plan goes even further, stating that major redevelopment of some group centres, including Dickson, Kingston and Manuka, would be undesirable if those changes went against the purpose of the Territory Plan hierarchy of established centres.

The National Capital Plan, together with the Territory Plan, clearly states that it is not desirable for there to be an increased retail intensification in centres which would detract from the pre-eminence of town centres. The point is even more concerning as the Weston group centre is located less than three kilometres from the Woden town centre. There have been significant yet-to-be-released areas within Molonglo Valley which are already designated as CZ1 core zones. This indicates that there are further group centres proposed for these future areas. Indications of the size of these yet-to-be-released areas suggest that the CZ1 zone areas will be larger than the CZ1 zone area for the Weston group centre, thus further diluting the retail offering within the Woden town centre and its intended catchment area.

The Weston group centre is considered a lower order centre under the National Capital Plan, intended to meet the varying needs of local residents. The concept of lower order centres does not envisage an expansion of retail uses to the extent proposed in this draft variation. The extent of the retail expansion proposed in this draft variation is of a size that would encroach considerably on the intended primacy of Woden town centre within the Woden township and the hierarchy and therefore is not supported by Scentre Group.

Furthermore, an over-expansion of retail uses within the Weston group centre would have an adverse impact on our existing businesses and our customers within Woden town centre. These changes would detract from business profitability due to the resulting reduced customer base. Where retail is intensified in areas outside town centres, customers reduce their visits to those town centres. As a result, services and business within these primary town centres falter and can be expected to provide lower levels of service and become unviable.

It should also be noted that the planned stage 2 of the light rail, a significant investment being made by the government, is intended to service Woden town centre. A key benefit of light rail is the greater access to services, amenities and shops that it provides to residents who rely on public transport. The benefits to these residents would decrease the services offered, due to a dilution of retailers within Woden town centre. Ultimately, this will adversely affect the intensity of retail use within the town centre by causing a shift in the position of the core of Woden town centre, contrary to the vision that has to date been passed for the ACT.

Transport hubs will be less frequently patronised and the use of the town centre for community purposes will suffer. From an economic standpoint, town centres like Woden will suffer and decline if retail over-expansion is permitted in areas that are not meant to be retail intensive under the planning instruments and foresight of the Australian Capital Territory. The concept of the hierarchy is not intended to create even competition in the uses and the intensity of the uses between a town centre and the group centres within the relevant township. Instead, the intention is for group centres to complement the support of the town centre within the relevant township.

Increasing the competition between a town centre and its surrounding group centres for the same kind of customers does not achieve this.

Further, there is regular discussion about what can be done within Canberra to reinvigorate not only Civic but also town centres. An example of this is that at the last ACT election one of the proposals that the opposition put to the public was providing rebates on commercial development within Civic and town centres as a way to encourage landowners to redevelop properties in order to reinvigorate these areas.

There has since been further discussion, within the last few months, about reinvigorating and reviving Woden town centre, which has included proposed variations to the Woden master plan. In order to reinvigorate Woden town centre, there needs to be further development as well as demand from tenants to use the spaces that are developed. There will be little revival of the town centre if spaces are created for, for example, restaurants, cafes and community facilities with active street frontages but with no further tenant demand to satisfy the town centre supply, as the market has fragmented and dispersed to lower order areas.

In summary, Scentre Group strongly objects to the draft variation due to its detraction from the intention of the Territory Plan for the Weston group centre to complement and support the activities of the Woden town centre, its diversion from the territory hierarchy of group centres and town centres, and the detrimental effect that retail intensification in group centres has upon nearby town centres—town centres which should be the focal point for retail services in the wider community. Further, these proposed changes, as submitted by Weston group centre, substantially vary the intentions and retail hierarchy of the planning instruments—instruments that are in place to ensure sustainable growth and viability of existing and future businesses within our group and town centres.

On behalf of our local town centre businesses and retailers within our town centres, Scentre Group simply wish to ensure that the core principles of clustering and retail hierarchy are maintained for the success of all and not undermined by this proposed variation, which is notably inconsistent with all ACT planning instruments. Scentre Group submits that the proposal and the draft variation to intensify retail in the Weston group centre should not be pursued, on the basis that it is clearly inconsistent with those parts of the planning instruments that seek to maintain the hierarchy of centres in the ACT and the primacy of the town centres over group centres.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you done any recent modelling of what impact the proposed expansion of Weston would have on Woden town centre? Clearly it is not a plus, but have you gone further than that?

**Ms Taylor:** We have not done any modelling on the specific example of Weston group centre, but we have seen the effect that the recent loss of 700 to Civic from the vicinity of Woden town centre has had on the shopping centre. We can pinpoint the date on which that declined. Businesses started to suffer when those 700 left for Civic. I do not have the facts and figures in front of me for that example.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you think a retail expansion or an expansion of community facilities in Coleman Court, Weston, would have the same sort of impact? My

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understanding is that the draft variation talks about both community facilities and retail expansion. Do you see those two having a similar impact on your business?

**Ms Taylor:** Similar, if not more. As we know, in this day and age we are heading for online retail and a number of other threats that our businesses have to deal with on a daily basis. We are probably getting more adversely affected in our commercial space environment to maintain the retail businesses. We have already seen the number of vacancies increase in the centre just from that small fallout.

**MS LAWDER:** This may be related to the question about modelling, but do you have a ratio that you work to, a preferred ratio of either government departments or employment centres in the nearby vicinity and also the numbers of dwellings in the catchment areas?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes, we do a lot of modelling on our catchment area, the total trade area and our main catchment area. We have seen just over the last couple of years a lot of leakage purely from the people that used to commute into the town centre. We are seeing quite a bit of leakage. What I want to get across is that, because we have recognised this trend and the need to reinvest in Woden town centre, this is really what we will be focusing on in the next couple of years. We currently have under submission for Bradley Street, which is just behind the shopping centre, a proposal to reactivate that street frontage with a new restaurant precinct.

**MS LAWDER:** Near Corinna Street?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes, Bradley Street: that area which is just opposite Rashays. So we are looking to do further development in Woden. That is just a small part of it. However, if the retail hierarchy is put aside in some respects and lower order centres are given the rights to overexpand, it just does not make it viable for us to invest.

**MS LAWDER:** There is a lot of revitalisation of Woden, the towers that are currently empty and that kind of thing. If there was a greater employment base would that alter your view of Weston?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes, and that brings me to Bonner House. That has been vacant for five or six years now. I have recently joined Scentre Group; I have only been here a month. But one of my top priorities is to get that fully tenanted and reinvigorate Woden town centre. It is just part of the parcel, really, part of the jigsaw. We are hoping to invest in that and revitalise. I notice the number of vacant buildings in the area. I think that as soon as we start to regenerate a bit, it will have a trickling effect to really bring the town centre back to what it should be.

**MS LAWDER:** It is better to grow the pie than grow your share of the pie, or both.

**Ms Taylor:** Yes. And do not get me wrong; we are not averse to competition whatsoever. The two vacant buildings—

**THE CHAIR:** Alexander and Albemarle.

**Ms Taylor:** Exactly. I know that recently there has been some movement on those

fronts. We are looking forward to that commercial space being reactivated, and a small amount of retail around it as well, because we believe that the civic square really needs it. We are all for that solution.

**MS LAWDER:** I am thinking that you would have different market segments: the employment base versus the residential area around, and then people who come from further afield—

**Ms Taylor:** Just to be there some days, yes.

**MS LAWDER:** Do you have a feel for what proportions of the market they are?

**Ms Taylor:** We definitely do. We break them into market segments. I think we have got about 25 market segments in Scentre Group. That is all based on the types of spenders they are. We have got all the credit card information, so we know where they spend their money. We know where we leak it to and what part of the market share we lose out on. This is why this type of development really concerns us. We want to stop that leakage from happening and really focus on where it should support our local businesses in the town centres.

**MS LAWDER:** I wonder whether the growth of Molonglo is a benefit for both Weston centre and Woden, people from that new Molonglo area. Do you have research that shows they are coming to Woden town centre as well?

**Ms Taylor:** No, I do not at this stage. But on that you have got to bear in mind the quantity of those people and how underrepresented Woden town centre currently is, because it is underperforming so much, just in respect of the vacant space. That is where I believe we really need to regenerate and not dissipate it throughout the entire centre and the lower order centres to that extent. Do not get me wrong: you do need convenience shopping, to support your local residents, but not on this scale. That is the point.

**MS CHEYNE:** How are you defining a lower order centre? What sorts of services does a lower order centre provide?

**Ms Taylor:** That would be your typical 2,000 to 3,000 square metre supermarket with some adjoining retail and service functions: hairdressers, dry-cleaners, services, banks, the lower—

**MS CHEYNE:** What sorts of services would propel Weston group centre to become a higher order centre?

**Ms Taylor:** That would be one or two larger supermarkets, which this would provide ample space for, and lots more DDS services. When you look at those major—

**MS CHEYNE:** What did you say?

**Ms Taylor:** Sorry—discount department stores, the likes of Kmart, Target and Big W. And just bear in mind that those types of retailers do like to cluster, so keeping them in Woden town centre is important to us.

**MS CHEYNE:** You emphasised that Weston is three kilometres from Woden town centre. What effect does it have on Westfield at the moment?

**Ms Taylor:** At the moment we are accepting the current market share. As I said, it is just the scale and bearing in mind the new transport and how many more people will be coming to Woden town centre. We want to do things like look at really becoming a transport hub. That is probably some of the future planning we have for the car park area as well, on north Callam Street, and things like that—just really providing those end-of-trip facilities to encourage people to bike and use public transport. We feel that if they are dissipated throughout the community it is just not something that we can provide, because there are not as many users.

**MS CHEYNE:** You also noted something we are currently looking into, so we cannot say too much: that the Woden Territory Plan variation is intended to help revitalise the area as well. Obviously you have a very keen stake in that, as you have mentioned. But is the point you are making that we cannot do both because the demand is not there for the supply that both the draft variations would result in?

**Ms Taylor:** We are just extremely concerned about the viability of both. That is really the point.

**MS CHEYNE:** Based on demand and supply?

**Ms Taylor:** Based on demand and supply and based on the adage, which was my experience in the UK as well, that it is always about the hierarchy of town centres. That is where the focus should be. You put the largest stuff all together. Everything feeds off that. You keep the convenient retail for your quick day shops, if you need to go out and grab something from the supermarket, pop out and get your hair done and things like that—the quick things, less than two hours. You could not spend more than two hours doing a shop at a lower order centre; whereas with the highest we encourage families to come and visit, stay, spend the day around the town centre and use the facilities, the libraries and kids' play areas. That is another thing that we are hoping to add to the Bradley Street development: just a small play area where you can sit outside and get some sunlight.

**MS CHEYNE:** Did you say in your opening statement that something that is characteristic of the town centre is that services have already fragmented and dispersed? Are you able to expand on that?

**Ms Taylor:** Was it the workers?

**MS CHEYNE:** What has fragmented and dispersed? What is not there?

**Ms Taylor:** I am not sure if I read that correctly in my statement, but a future consequence would be that it would be fragmented.

**MS LAWDER:** Did Scentre also make a submission about the Curtin group centre when they were doing their master planning process?

**Ms Taylor:** Not to my knowledge, no.

**MS LAWDER:** You are concerned about the proximity of Weston to Woden but also you talked about potentially Woden becoming a transport hub. So you must have been looking or have looked already at the short, medium and long-term growth and opportunities related to the light rail. Again, do you see that as growing your share of the pie, or growing the pie and your share of the pie?

**Ms Taylor:** Both, because whatever we do will have a ripple effect on the community. We are very conscious of that. We are well aware that the Woden town centre has been in discussion for the rail opportunity. As part of that, we would look to grow with it as well. As I said, it will not be just us that it benefits; it will be the surrounding businesses and retailers as well.

**MS LAWDER:** I understand the proximity to Weston, but in your modelling and looking at it, is the Tuggeranong Parkway a sort of natural barrier for a lot of people? Do they tend to go to one and not the other?

**Ms Taylor:** No, I have not seen that in any of the modelling that we have done in our trade area.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Ms Lawder asked about Curtin. I will ask the same question about Mawson. You would be aware that there has recently been a draft master plan and there is potential expansion there. Is your view the same on that? Mawson is even closer. It is a group centre and it is even closer to Woden than Weston is.

**Ms Taylor:** As I said, we are not anti-competitive. The scale of that one we see as sufficient for its purpose. It is just the scale of this development and the proposed changes to the planning instruments that we are concerned about, which is why we have not objected to the other one.

**THE CHAIR:** And you feel the same about Curtin?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes, at this stage, to my knowledge. I have not seen it yet.

**THE CHAIR:** Neither of these has yet become a Territory Plan variation, but both of them have had substantive—

**Ms Taylor:** To our knowledge, the scale of those ones does not concern us as much as this one.

**THE CHAIR:** They are currently both smaller than Weston. I was very interested in your comment that community facilities were probably of more concern to you than additional retail space. The people of Weston have for a long time been looking for more medical facilities and a community hub. Do you feel those would be inappropriate to have there?

**Ms Taylor:** No, especially when you look at opportunities for Bonner House and the surrounding areas—the buildings, as I said, that we do not own across the civic centre. I am sure they will be leasing to a number of different uses. Going back to Bonner

House, I believe that we are looking at other uses as well: childcare centres and things like that. So it is not purely retail that we are focused on, because we understand that with every X amount of retail you need supporting facilities to still make it attractive and to really benefit the community in terms of use. If they do want to come and spend a day here, you need more for them to do.

**THE CHAIR:** Given that Weston is looking at things like more medical facilities and a community hub, are those particular issues, you would feel, for Weston or it is just anything? Is there any expansion in Weston that you would feel was not a problem?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes, definitely—for complementary uses, just not competing uses.

**THE CHAIR:** What would you see as a complementary use?

**Ms Taylor:** Complementary would be medical services if that was something they wanted to look at. Competitive would be more the supermarket variety, the fashion, the Australian fashion, which is what we really want to keep in the core town centre, the retail side.

**MS CHEYNE:** Is there anything in the draft variation that you would find palatable, any change that could—obviously I cannot predict—be modified that would make you more supportive of it rather than a blanket “Don’t support any of it”?

**Ms Taylor:** Of course we are willing to consider other changes. I think it is just the sheer scale of it, when you look at the metreage involved.

**MS CHEYNE:** So if the scale was perhaps reduced then—

**Ms Taylor:** Significantly, yes.

**MS CHEYNE:** It would have to be significantly reduced?

**Ms Taylor:** Yes. It is increasing by more than 50 per cent at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** What about the changes to parking? Obviously it is a determinant of where people go.

**Ms Taylor:** There is an initiative that we are hoping to pass tomorrow, which has not actually been made public, looking at things to reinvigorate—just small initiatives that we try to do at Scentre Group. We are currently re-evaluating Sunday parking and charging for that, and things like that. There is going to be a change, hopefully, that we can announce after tomorrow’s owners meeting that will bring the parking back in line with the surrounding centre in relation to the \$2 all-day parking that you can get at the moment. Little things like that we hope will encourage people to just come back to the town centre.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much for your time. A transcript will be sent to you as soon as possible for corrections.

**ANDERSON, MR THOMAS GRIFFITHS**, Chair, Weston Creek Community Council

**MCGINN, MS PATRICIA ANNE**, Deputy Chair, Weston Creek Community Council

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon. I am sure you have seen the pink privilege statement before, but could you, for the record, say that you agree to it?

**Mr Anderson:** Yes, I agree to it.

**Ms McGinn:** Yes, I agree to it.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you got an opening statement?

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you for the opportunity to come along and speak today in relation to this. We found the draft variation at times difficult to understand fully and at times difficult to follow. Within it there is a complex mix of issues and they need to be considered together, notwithstanding what your previous witnesses said. The consultation was very extensive and it is generally reflected in the document.

One of the issues we have is with building heights. From our perspective, in our submission, there are a number of agreed points, there are a number of disagreements and there are a number of questions. We see the possibility of a new community centre being excluded by the way the zoning has gone. That is our reading of the document.

**Ms McGinn:** Tom already mentioned, and I would like to stress, the huge amount of consultation that went on when the master plan was drawn up. The community was heavily involved. That plan identified opportunities. It also suggested key actions. Some of those have been carried forward into the precinct plan, as far as I can see. Some of them have not. We think that, on the whole, the precinct plan should acknowledge and provide for those opportunities and key actions, because that is what was agreed with the community, and that is who we are here to represent.

Having listened to Scentre, we accept that market forces will dictate to some extent what happens. However, what the community feels it needs and what we would like to see should have at least equal weight, if not more, in our opinion. But it is going to be a mix of the two, obviously.

I wrote most of our submission. I hope that you have read it all, because there are quite a few minor points in there as well as the major ones. Tom mentioned heights. The second one I have on my list is a community centre. The third one is car parks. The fourth one gets very little mention in the precinct plan, although it did in the master plan; it is the lack of integration with the public urban space spine and the flow-through of pedestrian and cycling traffic in all directions. It is mentioned. There is a plan about it, but it seems to be rather minor, whereas I feel that with this level of neighbourhood centre this is an integral part of it, linking it to the community. That is something that has been a little bit neglected. Strengthening the recreation precinct is another thing that was mentioned in the master plan which is not mentioned in the

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precinct plan. And integrating the public realm improvements—I do not see any mention of public realm improvements in the precinct plan at all.

Height we would like to see by measurement, not by number of storeys, because that is an absolute trap for the unwary, particularly if you have got something that has a very much higher first level. I mention that in several places. The community seems to be reasonably accepting of four storeys. I think they might be very unhappy with anything above that. In particular, in table 2, area A, which is where the club is at the moment, is already in an elevated position. If that is to be six storeys, which has been suggested, it is going to totally dominate. I really think that that is inappropriate, given the size of the Weston—

**THE CHAIR:** Could you make it clearer for anyone who reads this where you are referring to?

**Ms McGinn:** I am referring to page 4—

**THE CHAIR:** Page 4, figure 2.

**Mr Anderson:** Sorry, it is not that one.

**Ms McGinn:** Sorry, it is the one on the other side of the road. My apologies. It is the club I am talking about, even though I may have said A and it is not A.

**THE CHAIR:** So you are talking about the Raiders. Is that not—

**Ms McGinn:** A is the corner opposite the club.

**Mr Anderson:** A is the fast food outlet where—

**Ms McGinn:** Crust pizza, the gym and all that sort of stuff. The point I am trying to make is that an increased height has been suggested for the club and it is on a slope, so if the height is measured on Hindmarsh Drive it will be at least a full storey higher on the other side. It also has a considerable amount of car parking, which is quite frequently very full, completely full. That is one of the heights. There is mention of another very high building, six storeys, on what I call E. This is on page 5 of my submission.

**Mr Anderson:** The club is attachment C on page 12. That is, in area B, five storeys, which in our minds is far too high.

**Ms McGinn:** The storeys are split between what is within the commercial zones and what is not within the commercial zones, the club not being in a commercial zone. It is in an IZ1 zone. Continuing with the heights, let us go to page 5 of our submission. We are talking about the heights there. Area A is the area which is within RZ1 and is opposite the club.

**THE CHAIR:** Opposite the club is the fast food.

**Ms McGinn:** Areas B and C are currently two car parks, the southern and northern

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car parks. I have written here:

The Zone objectives for CZ1 are very encouraging in principle as they encourage diversity and the maintenance of a high standard of urban design—

—which I would like to emphasise means that we have got a lot of places without a high standard of urban desire, albeit older buildings.

However, the range of “Minimum Assessment Track” developments is long and varied with the majority appearing acceptable. Residential use is included and apart from having a different character, this proposal also raises the question of additional car parking ...

So height falls over into car parking. The two are inextricably linked because of the building on B and C.

Most of this is in what I have said in the submission. Area D, again, is a sloping site with two storeys for the larger part et cetera. E is the smallest of these areas and it is not unreasonable to consider that, due to its proximity to the green spine, it may be developed for residential purposes. Whilst this may have some appeal as a focal point for the centre, and I am not arguing with that, it would also overlook current established residential areas to the east which I do not think have been considered. Four storeys might be okay, though even then it is above the tree line, but six storeys would be overlooking all the residential areas on the other side of the green spine. We do think that is a very good idea and we certainly do not think the residents will.

That is about all of that. I have talked about building design quite a lot, active frontages. We would love some awnings. Pedestrian connections I have talked about, and vehicle access.

The other thing, related to height to some extent, is in the area of facility, leisure and accommodation areas. That is where the club is but it also stretches right down Parkinson Street, where there is single-storey residential on the other side. Much higher buildings are suggested: a huge amount of overlooking. They may be increased to four storeys, five storeys on area B and six storeys on area C, which all runs along Parkinson Street. Currently in that street are the Irish Club, a church and a childcare centre. You are saying it can go up to four and six storeys along there. As previously stated, the council does not agree to heights above the lesser of 50 metres and four storeys.

What we are talking about is heights all over the place. I am trying to gel this with the car parking and also with what we have just heard from the previous people here. But really what we are talking about is a neighbourhood centre which falls somewhere between the size of Southlands or Curtin but is nowhere as big as a town centre. The community wants it to remain a community based area. There is no way we are trying to compete in any way whatsoever with Woden town centre, which we consider our town centre. However, when the master plan was looked at there was no feeling that they wanted to lose anything of the character of the centre. That is why, to some extent, one of the major things we have commented on is the community centre. The community centre at the moment is very old. It has reached its use-by date. The site that was raised during the master plan is the one which is currently unoccupied on the

other side of Parkinson Street, opposite area A—not quite opposite.

**THE CHAIR:** It is the Raiders opposite.

**Ms McGinn:** We were very pleased to see that the precinct plan suggests two storeys for that, because there is neighbouring residential which is two-storey. However, looking at the uses that appear in the criteria, it does not seem to be marked down for a community centre. It seems to be more like “public health, welfare or information services”. That, to us, does not sound like a community centre at all. There is no replacement for the community hall. It appears more like a health centre. We do have some private health services at Weston Creek within the area we are talking about. We might like to have some public health facilities but not at the expense of a community centre, which we have not got.

There was mention of a community hub, which I wrote about. However, that is not a substitute because it is fully occupied by small, community based organisations. It is well away from the Weston Creek centre, poorly served by public transport. It is on a slope and it is like a bloody rabbit warren. It is not very usable as a community centre. We desperately need a new community centre. We have to have our meetings in a club, which has stairs, making it very awkward for people with disabilities. So the community centre is something we do not want to walk away from, full stop.

It is also mentioned in the master plan that the community centre should cater for diverse community needs. We need a new community centre to do that. We are a diverse community. We are also a community that is ageing and regenerating at the same time, as are a lot of suburbs at the same sort of geographic distance from the city centre. It took us six years to get 76 spaces to cater for the inflow of people from Molonglo. We note with interest the comments that are made about car parking in the precinct plan and the code. We just hope that all the intentions that are stated there are carried out.

Like all of the neighbourhood centres—Curtin has got the same issues; Mawson is not quite so bad—we are a defined area. There is not much space. You cannot suddenly grow some space. So any extra car parking is going to have to go up. However, while that is being constructed, where are people going to park? Also, if construction goes on in the two existing car parks not only will whoever builds there have to allow car parking for their occupants, be they residential or whatever, but also they are going to have to replace the existing public car parking, otherwise the whole centre becomes non-viable.

**Mr Anderson:** Those are all the issues we have with this. As I said before, they are complex and they are interrelated. What we have tried to do is to highlight those that are different.

**THE CHAIR:** You talked about the need for a community centre or community hub, whichever it is called. Where do you think the best location for that is? I appreciate your statement that the current one is past its use-by date. Where do you think it should go?

**Ms McGinn:** Where it was agreed in the master plan, which is section 75, I think.

**Mr Anderson:** Across the road.

**THE CHAIR:** Across the road in Parkinson. Across the road from 84, so outside the—

**Mr Anderson:** The community association who actually run the community centre would not agree; they would prefer it to be on the northern side of Parkinson Street, about where the—

**THE CHAIR:** More up in the direction of the Irish Club.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes. There is a building there, the living health centre, I think.

**Ms McGinn:** Yes, immediately adjacent to that large southern car park. In the master plan for some reason it got identified as being across the road and adjacent to that small two-storey residential development, where the gingerbread lady is.

**THE CHAIR:** You have lost me.

**Ms McGinn:** You turn off Hindmarsh Drive.

**Mr Anderson:** The only art that we have in Weston Creek. It is not a gingerbread lady; it is three children.

**MS LAWDER:** Three people, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** It is a public sculpture.

**Ms McGinn:** Yes; it is open space at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** For the interest of anyone who is trying to figure it out, I was thinking of gingerbread that you eat. I thought it was a small business.

**Mr Anderson:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** It is a piece of public sculpture at one of the entrances to Weston.

**Mr Anderson:** But further down. I think it is behind the current bus stop on the south side of Parkinson Street, which is split by—

**Ms McGinn:** I myself think that the site on the same side as the centre would be a far better site, and I think the community would feel that too, because it is closer to everything. Also, there is more room. I do not know whether it would be a larger site; I think there would be fewer physical restrictions.

**Mr Anderson:** And it makes access so much easier on that side, because if you are parking you do not have to cross Parkinson Street. There are no pedestrian crossings on Parkinson Street, in spite of our wish to have them there.

**THE CHAIR:** Should we put that in our list of things?

**Mr Anderson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Pedestrian crossings on roads.

**Mr Anderson:** And extend the 40-kilometre speed limit past the Irish Club. We have been on about that for a long time. You have a 60 speed limit opposite the childcare centre; you only have to move it 200 metres and suddenly you are down to 40, and you have a childcare centre, a church and a club that all suddenly benefit from that speed limit reduction.

**Ms McGinn:** On the draft variation, you have the site we are talking about being zoned CZ1. No, it is not; sorry: it is yellow, community facility 67. It is that area there. There is the car park. It is 67 on the draft variation. I am not quite sure where the boundary to 67 is.

**Mr Anderson:** The area above 67?

**Ms McGinn:** No, below where the actual digits 67 are. There is a long rectangular block which is in actual fact the car park. It is just to the right of that, below where you have the “6” and the “7”. It is that site there.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry; I was looking at the other one. The blue is so dark you cannot see the name of the street.

**Mr Anderson:** It is on Parkinson Street. It is the living health centre.

**THE CHAIR:** And that is what is proposed?

**Mr Anderson:** That is where we think it would be best suited.

**THE CHAIR:** But not where this—

**Mr Anderson:** Not across the road on block 75, which would only, we think, create issues with the residents there by having a community centre.

**Ms McGinn:** You would get appeals left, right and centre.

**Mr Anderson:** It would be less than—

**MR MILLIGAN:** Have you had consultation with those residents there directly or have they expressed any concerns?

**Ms McGinn:** Yes.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Through the community council?

**Mr Anderson:** They have expressed in the planning process for the master plan and to us their desire that no community centre be built there because of the noise factor

and the disruption factor. Some of them would be—

**MR MILLIGAN:** Access to that, though, would be on the opposite side to that residential area?

**Mr Anderson:** Yes, but wherever you built it, it would be within 30 metres of their fence line, I would have thought. It is not a really in-depth block.

**MR MILLIGAN:** You would prefer to keep block 75 as open green space?

**Mr Anderson:** There was a plan to put a bike shed there a while ago as part of the transport planning.

**Ms McGinn:** There is quite a pedestrian flow. There is a footpath that comes down through that area and ends up fairly close to the bus stop, if my memory serves me right, and that is reasonably heavily used by both pedestrians and cyclists.

**Mr Anderson:** This is why we are saying it is complex. Once you change one thing, you look at others that are affected by that and you get into this mix of how you get around all of these issues as they go into this melting pot, if you like.

**Ms McGinn:** I am assuming that you have all read our submission.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms McGinn:** There are lots of very small things in there. For instance, with plot ratios, it says:

The Council is not sure why the plot ratio rule in commercial zones does not apply and requests that an explanation be provided.

We have asked for some explanations right the way through. We have said we do not agree with some things, but we supported quite a lot of the stuff that is in there. It is about trying to retain some sort of character. You can see we have green on at least three sides, but there are no linkages at all. As a cyclist I would desperately like some nice cyclepaths, but never mind. We would like some linkages so that it is not isolated, so that the community is drawn in.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Between the open spaces?

**Ms McGinn:** Yes. I think we suffer heavily in Canberra from our shopping centres being based on the American model. They are all internalised. It would be good if we could make some small efforts to externalise them. You mentioned interactive frontages. The same applies in Woden. It is the same sort of thing. People get attracted into a shopping centre by what they interact with on the outside of it. The long blank wall along the side of Woolworths in Brierly Street is a typical example of that sort of planning. Getting some penetration into the shopping centre is good for the community feel; it is good for the viability, if you like to use that word, of the shopping centre, the interaction. Sorry; I will not rave on anymore.

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**THE CHAIR:** That is fine. There are proposals for potential development on the two big car parks. Would you be suggesting that part of that should be made into public open space, a bit of green, so that you get to join one—

**Ms McGinn:** Yes: a planter, a small courtyard, something.

**THE CHAIR:** But it does not quite line up that well with Trenerry Street, unfortunately, which would be where you would want it to be.

**Ms McGinn:** We have one piddling children's play area, and the centre turns its back on it totally. You no doubt know that one of our community members has been advocating very strongly for a children's play area at Waramanga. That is typical of the sort of thing where the parents or child minders, whoever, can sit and have coffee and watch the children play. It brings business into the coffee shop, which in turn brings business into the centre. It is about having all of this interaction with the public instead of shutting them out.

Two squares, two small plazas, one on either end, would most likely have some activation. That is already happening to some extent where the ramp goes up to Aldi, the coffee shop on the corner there by the newsagents. It already happens there. They have spilled outside. That is the sort of thing I am talking about, if that could be formalised there in conjunction with building on that southern car park.

**Mr Anderson:** We do have the upgrade of Brierly Street and Trenerry Street.

**Ms McGinn:** Yes, taking place at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you happy with that?

**Mr Anderson:** It is hard to see around the concrete walls and the curves and everything else that is there to get an impression of what the final product will be like. But it will be level. There will be opportunities for people to sit there. There were two coffee shops. The one that seems to be unfortunate—in that it is forever going broke—depending upon who the new owner is, is in a prime spot for it. It is a lovely location. I think it would be worthwhile.

Again, we point out here that we wanted wider footpaths in Brierly Street, yet in this document somewhere there is a zero-metre setback on Brierly Street. We cannot quite understand that. Whether that means that the setback is from where the actual frontages of the buildings are now or whether it is from another position, I am not sure. That is another one where we find it confusing.

**MS LAWDER:** You mentioned 76 additional car parks you have got.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes.

**MS LAWDER:** Have you noticed an increase in traffic, not just cars but traffic, to the centre generally with the growth in Molonglo?

**Mr Anderson:** This all started in 2009, not long after the development of Molonglo

started. The first indication was tradesmen who were starting the building there. Then, as people have moved in, it has just been the same. You will hear everyone say it is very difficult to get a parking spot at Cooleman Court. I never try the south side because it is always full. I go to where people now do not like to go, which is the works around Trenerry Street. You can get a car park there sometimes on the north side, but it depends on the time of the day that you go there. It is very difficult. I do not know that there is any increase. There cannot be any increase because it is nearly always full.

Recently there has been a change in the all-day parking there; they have taken another three bays and made it two hours. That would increase the number of places for people who are just going there to maybe do their supermarket shopping or spend a couple of hours there going to a coffee shop. The all-day parking has moved to where the new parking is, down by the tennis courts. That is what I would say. But there is one parking place for a truck or a car with a trailer to park around the whole centre.

**Ms McGinn:** I was just talking to Tom briefly, having listened to what you said. I think one of the issues is that this neighbourhood centre has an ALDI, a Target and several other clothes shops. It is not the same as the slightly smaller centres. You mentioned traffic going through. The traffic on Brierly Street has reduced, in my opinion, whenever I am there, because now it is restricted where they have closed off Trenerry and people are not turning into Trenerry anymore. That is a plus.

The new car parking that was put in, down the back in Liardet Street, is nearly always full. There are some park-and-ride spaces there. In relation to the car parking down towards the tennis courts, where there were quite a few extra spaces included, where they moved the parking up, I suggested to the centre management some time ago—and I think they did do this—that they ask the tenants within the centre that their employees park down there. It is not a very long walk. They are not carrying their shopping. It therefore frees up some of the spaces. As Tom says, the all-day stuff has been removed. And we would dearly love some parking inspectors to trot along there occasionally.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you.

**Ms McGinn:** Does that answer your question? It is a busy centre in lots of respects.

**Mr Anderson:** And it really is the only meeting place in Weston Creek. If you want to casually meet, generally you will go to one of the coffee shops there. There are a couple of others in the urban centres, such as Duffy, Waramanga and Chapman, where you might go, but they are pretty small compared to the ones in Cooleman Court.

**Ms McGinn:** We have also got the indoor tennis centre. We have also got a very large gym. It is a fairly comprehensive centre. People come from Woden to go to ALDI, for instance. That is a big drawback.

**THE CHAIR:** You were concerned about the industrial trades being added at the shopping centre site. I was not at all sure what that was going to be, but I thought it was probably something like a servo, like where Kmart's have servos connected to

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them. Is that the sort of thing that you think it is going to be? What is it that concerns you about this? What do you think it is going to be?

**Ms McGinn:** I think the concern I expressed in here was that that particular usage was described in the criteria, whether it is only going to be associated with the car park or not. I think that is the only mention I made of it.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, it was associated with the car park. I was not quite sure what the problem was.

**Ms McGinn:** There are things like car washes. In Woden, for instance, they fit radios. It is that sort of stuff. We needed a bit of clarification about what is meant with that. I cannot remember quite what I said there, but I can remember mentioning it, asking for some clarification.

**THE CHAIR:** You did mention it as one of your concerns. We will be talking to the department shortly and we might see if we can get a clarification.

**Ms McGinn:** Without large employment being generated in this centre, I cannot see it in any way challenging Woden, and we certainly would not want that to happen. I was very interested to hear what you were saying. My own personal viewpoint is that, looking at what might happen here, we are more likely to get residential above, with just perhaps something small underneath. That was how I saw it, but that is just a purely personal comment.

**Mr Anderson:** More along the lines of the Dickson development, where you have commercial on the ground level and accommodation above. That is the way we thought we see it.

**Ms McGinn:** Yes. For instance, in Brierly Street, opposite where Woolworths is, back a bit, there are already a few restaurants with residential above them and around the corner. I see the Dickson model as working quite well, actually. And the same on the side of where the green spine is. That is what they have done at Dickson. The bike path goes up the back of Dickson and they have restaurants underneath and residential over the top looking out over the green area. That seems to be a good model along that side. It is what the market is going to dictate.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any last burning questions? We were planning to have a few minutes break before the next witnesses. Is there anything you feel we have totally missed?

**Ms McGinn:** Just please read it again and pick up on the small comments we have made.

**THE CHAIR:** We will, yes. Thank you both very much for attending. You will be sent a transcript shortly, if there are any corrections you need to make.

**Short suspension.**

**GENTLEMAN, MR MICK**, Minister for Planning and Land Management

**PONTON, MR BEN**, Director-General, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

**KAUCZ, MS ALIX**, Senior Manager, Territory Plan Section, Planning Policy Division, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

**FLANERY, MS FLEUR**, Executive Director, Planning Policy Division, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, minister. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you and your officials for attending today. I draw your attention to the pink privilege card on the table. Can you and the officials please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement.

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, we do.

**THE CHAIR:** I remind witnesses that proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes, webstreamed and broadcast live.

Minister, do you have an opening statement?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, thank you. I just want to take a few minutes to give you an overview of where we are with draft variation 329.

I have supported the draft variation on the basis that it is the planning policy recommendations of the approved Weston Group centre master plan. It rezones land within the centre to provide a modest extension to the shopping centre and provide additional community facility land. The variation also amends the Weston precinct code to provide certainty to business owners and the community as to the future desired character and built form of the centre.

The proposal is consistent with the ACT's key strategic planning documents, the 2012 ACT planning strategy and transport for Canberra 2012-31 document, by encouraging an increase in development density within a commercial centre as a balance to the continued development in greenfield areas. While there is currently limited demand for increased development within the centre, the changes to the Territory Plan will provide for future growth and encourage rejuvenation over time, in accordance with the 10 to 20-year time frame of the master plan implementation. I am advised that one of our EPSD workers here, Erin, has been working hard on this master plan. Hopefully, she does not have to wait another 10 to 20 years to see it come to fruition.

The variation has been developed to mostly follow the recommendations of the approved Weston group centre master plan, with a necessary amendment to address concerns raised by the environment protection agency, EPA. The directorate can provide further advice on the changes around the use of community activity in the centre if needed.

The delay in proceeding with the variation once public consultation closed is noted. The pause allowed time for contamination studies over several of the sites proposed to

be rezoned to be undertaken. The studies have now been completed, with the Environment Protection Authority endorsing the continuation of the variation process. I acknowledge that there are some community concerns also.

There were nine submissions during public consultation on the draft variation. Submissions were predominantly concerned with the proposed rezoning of open space at the corner of Brierly Street and Parkinson Street to community facility land. Leading on from this was concern about impacts from future development on the site on surrounding residents. The draft variation was revised in response to these issues, including reduction in the maximum height permitted for development on the rezoned block from four storeys to two storeys.

I would like to reiterate that the draft variation is incorporating the planning-related recommendations of the approved Weston group centre master plan. While there is scope to amend the variation in keeping with the spirit of the master plan, the focus should be on the interpretation of the master plan recommendations in the draft variation rather than seeking review of the master plan recommendations.

I have in attendance with me representatives from EPSDD who will be able to assist with technical input into answers to questions that you may have on DV329. Together we are happy to answer any questions the committee wishes to ask.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. I imagine some of you were listening to the previous hearings. If so, you will have heard that we spent a fair bit of time talking about the community facilities and whether they were best located on section 75 or further down on the other side of the road on Parkinson Street. I will not try and repeat what was said because (a) I might get it wrong and (b) I assume that somebody was listening to it. What would be your commentary about why it is 75 as distinct from the other side of Parkinson Street down in the direction of the Irish Club and the living centre?

**Mr Gentleman:** We understand that there were some concerns around the community activity centre. We also have some information about CSD, not to limit the use of the site for activities unlikely to impact on surrounding residents. We were concerned about the EPA's advice in regard to noise for surrounding residential areas, but I will ask the directorate to give you more detail on that.

**Mr Ponton:** In relation to having section 75 for community facilities land, essentially that reflects what we heard during the master plan exercise. As the minister said in his opening statement, the master plan is the basis for the Territory Plan variation. Our interpretation of the master plan is that that is the best and most appropriate site for those community uses. We did respond during the consultation period for the Territory Plan variation to reduce the height in relation to section 75 to better reflect its location adjacent to residential land. Ms Kaucz, I do not know whether you want to add anything to that?

**Ms Kaucz:** The location was largely in response to the work that was done during the master plan, as Mr Ponton has mentioned, and addresses some of the issues in regard to the noise by limiting use on the site to not allow the community activity centre, particularly for noise, and the height, particularly overshadowing. It was indicated that

there was a need for such facility in the area, and that was nominated as being an appropriate place.

**Mr Ponton:** It is important to note that, whilst there has been consultation in relation to the Territory Plan variation, the master plan itself underwent extensive community consultation and engagement which included a series of workshops, drop-in sessions and the like. As Ms Kaucz said, we certainly heard the message from the community that they wanted to see more community facilities zoned land. During those consultations and engagement activities, this site was identified as the most appropriate.

**Ms Kaucz:** I would like to add that with that location as well, it is well located with public transport stops. You have that good access coming off Hindmarsh Drive and into the centre. That was also part of the reason behind that location.

**THE CHAIR:** There has been some confusion, or maybe just I am confused, about where the community hall could go. It could not go on 75?

**Ms Kaucz:** The community activity centre cannot go on section 75.

**THE CHAIR:** So you would see that staying where the current centre is? What would be your expectation of where it would be located?

**Ms Kaucz:** It could stay where it was. It is permitted in the commercial zones. The main issue with 75 is just that if it were rented out and creating noise issues. It can have other issues that are permitted under the community facility zone. But yes, a community activity centre could go in other parts of the centre, because it is permitted under the commercial zoning.

**THE CHAIR:** Of course, this is a planning document; there is no commitment from government to build any of these health centres, community halls or any of the like.

**Mr Ponton:** You are absolutely right, Ms Le Couteur. The master plan is the framework to encourage not only public investment but also private sector investments; it provides the framework. Then from the master plan we have certain changes to the Territory Plan that are identified within the master plan to give statutory effect to many of the provisions. That largely then allows for private sector investment, but also provides the government with ideas in relation to how it might invest in the centre.

**MR MILLIGAN:** You received a couple of submissions in relation to the hierarchy model of shopping centres. One of the concerns from the nearby shopping precinct with the Weston group centre was that it does not fall within that hierarchy model. In your response, you state that it is consistent. Can you explain and elaborate a bit more on why it is consistent and why their concerns may not be warranted?

**Mr Ponton:** Ms Flanery will give you the details on that.

**Ms Flanery:** Without knowing the specific comment—

**MS CHEYNE:** We are talking about Westfield.

**Ms Flanery:** From Westfield?

**THE CHAIR:** If you have read the centre's submissions, you will have seen it.

**Ms Flanery:** I would question that. I understand that, through the master plan process, the Weston site does still operate within the retail hierarchy. This proposed Territory Plan variation increases the commercial area by only 4,600 square metres, so it is not something the size of Westfield. I will just refer to my notes. Weston contains 25,000 metres squared of developable land in a CZ1 commercial zone, and this DV proposes to increase it by 4,600 metres squared. Woden is 125,000 metres squared. So if we are talking size without—

**THE CHAIR:** Slightly bigger, yes.

**Ms Flanery:** It is less than a quarter of the size, so I would strongly argue that it does remain within the retail hierarchy.

**MR MILLIGAN:** You mention here 15,000 to 20,000 people within a catchment, the Woden precinct centre. How far does that encompass? And because there is a new development going on further out, does that include that as part of that catchment area?

**Ms Flanery:** I might have to refer that to Ms Kaucz in terms of the catchment size that was looked at as part of this master planning process, if that is your question?

**MR MILLIGAN:** Yes.

**Ms Kaucz:** For the master plan for the—

**MR MILLIGAN:** Weston Creek.

**Ms Kaucz:** Weston Creek.

**MR MILLIGAN:** You mentioned that when you determine the precinct for shopping centres you determine it around a catchment of 15,000 to 20,000. How far out does that extend from Weston Creek for that catchment area?

**Ms Kaucz:** It is just the Weston Creek area. The Weston group centre is looking at those suburbs in Weston Creek; it does not look beyond there, because they have other group centres that service their weekly needs. They are in the catchment for the Woden town centre for their broader shopping needs and office space. The master plan looked at that catchment of Weston Creek.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Which includes the new development in Molonglo? To use Weston Creek as their local shopping precinct?

**Mr Ponton:** If I may, the planning at Molonglo includes its own local centres and a large commercial centre for Molonglo. In undertaking the planning for Molonglo

Valley, it was always anticipated that, until there was sufficient capacity or there were residents within the valley to justify those new centres, Cooleman Court would do some of the lifting.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Would feed into it?

**Mr Ponton:** That is right. But as the population increases in the Molonglo Valley, you will start to see the local centres developed, and in due course you will also see the larger commercial centre developed.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Does this new plan accommodate that transition period until Molonglo have their own sustainable shopping precinct?

**Mr Ponton:** Yes.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Is there going to be enough infrastructure and parking et cetera available at Weston Creek to cater for that?

**Mr Ponton:** In undertaking the master planning work, parking was a key consideration, understanding that there would be increased pressures on this centre. I think it was in 2015, shortly after the master plan was finalised, that the government committed to undertake some work to increase the number of car parking spaces in the centre. That was in recognition that there would be, over time, an increased demand on that centre, noting that it would be a transitional arrangement until there was sufficient capacity or demand within the Molonglo Valley.

**MS CHEYNE:** Even though the commercial increase is only small compared to Westfield or Woden, I think Scentre Group said that the increase in the Weston Creek group centre itself is going to be 50 per cent, which for them is significant. This is just comparing it within the centre, rather than centre to centre. In practical terms, how many new retail sites and what kinds of retail sites would we be expecting to be attracted to Weston with that increase in space?

**Ms Flanery:** You are asking how many additional retail sites?

**MS CHEYNE:** Yes, and what kind. I am not sure if you heard their testimony. Their concern was that we are going to get in Weston one or two larger supermarkets plus discount stores. Is that the intention?

**Ms Flanery:** No, it is not the intention. The DV proposes an increase of 4,600 square metres. In terms of the actual shops and the way that that is divided up, Ms Kaucz may have the specifics of how the blocks are proposed or assigned.

**Ms Kaucz:** It is largely what is available currently at the centre. And you have got the two existing car park sites that, in the longer term, can be released and developed for uses that are consistent with the CZ1 core zone, commercial core zone, and that includes supermarkets and other retailing. I suppose it would depend on the market as to what—

**MS CHEYNE:** But we have got to be doing it with a purpose, right? We are

expanding it for a reason. While I appreciate it is market forces and whoever decides to come in and what they want to put in there, you must have some sort of idea about what we would expect to go in there.

**Mr Ponton:** What would go into that location is a level of detail that a master plan ordinarily would not get into. The master plan is looking at higher level opportunities and, as I said, providing the framework for investment. It really would come down to, as Ms Kaucz said, what the market could cater to, keeping in mind that this was also partly influenced by what we expect to be an increased transitional demand on the centre.

Whether it be an expansion to the existing supermarket or another supermarket is something that would need to be determined by the market, even to the extent of whether it were a small or a full-line supermarket, if that is what the intention was. Certainly it is not for the Territory Plan to dictate what would actually go into that centre there. It could be a number of smaller retail premises, it could be something larger or it could be a combination of the two, but that would certainly be for the owners of the centre to determine in due course.

**MS CHEYNE:** Something you also said in response to Mr Milligan was that this is intended to be part of the transition phase while Molonglo grows and before it has its own group centre. Has any modelling been done on or thought put into whether, once the Molonglo group centre is complete, it could then cannibalise what we are intending to do with Weston? I am trying to look at it from the Molonglo and the Woden perspectives. We are increasing commercial space there with the intention that market forces will dictate what goes in there. But potentially, especially given that the population is growing so rapidly in Molonglo, once that centre is built we will end up with all of this commercial space that once had something but then has nothing again.

**Mr Ponton:** Up to a point. As Ms Flanery said, it is a relatively modest increase if you consider the overall size of the Molonglo Valley once it is developed. The expectation is that the Weston Creek centre would provide, as I said earlier, for the transition. But if you did not do anything else in the Molonglo Valley then the pressure on Weston Creek would be significant. Certainly the additional 4,600 square metres would not cater for that demand.

That is why what we are proposing is that there are opportunities in the Weston group centre and then, over time, the local centres and then the major commercial centre in the Molonglo Valley. That will be staged over a period of time, to ensure that what you are suggesting does not happen. Certainly it has been borne out in previous experiences in other parts of Canberra, where you saw local centres in Gungahlin, for example, being developed. The town centre as the major centre was developed over time as the demand warranted that, but the local centres are still operating quite efficiently and effectively.

**THE CHAIR:** My concern, given that population projections for Weston have Weston's population going down, and clearly there is a plan for a group centre in Molonglo, as there should be, is whether we are going to end up with a development which would have been welcome five years ago but in 10 years time is more than is needed.

**Mr Ponton:** I think it is safe to say that, whilst population in some of these centres is declining, the government has a fairly strong urban renewal agenda which will look to provide opportunities to renew some of these suburbs. I think that with the opportunities around the group centre itself, as we start to see some of the work coming out of the housing choices discussion paper, there may be opportunities for increased densities in this location. But I guess we will just have to wait and see what comes out of that. In terms of investment, I think that the private sector would ensure that they would only invest in this centre if they were confident that there were going to be a long-term market.

**MR MILLIGAN:** What measures are in place for Molonglo? At what point in the population growth will you look at developing a new group centre there to take those pressures off Weston Creek?

**Mr Gentleman:** It is already in the planning process. There is a retail opportunity, in a commercial sense, for when a new owner will come along and make those changes.

**Mr Ponton:** That is absolutely correct. In relation to that, further work is being undertaken through another part of my directorate's portfolio responsibilities. We have the land strategy team, which undertakes economic analysis in this space, and that then feeds into the land release program so that we get a very good and clear understanding of what the retail market model is telling us. That then informs the land release program so that we release land with sufficient lead time to allow for design, planning and approvals processes for centres to be operational in time for when we expect the demand.

**MR MILLIGAN:** And they will coincide with one another?

**MS LAWDER:** Have you already discussed the community hall?

**THE CHAIR:** A bit, but you can do some more on it.

**Mr Ponton:** We are happy to explore further.

**MS LAWDER:** My understanding is that it has changed from the draft to include a community activity centre "limited to public health, welfare or information services" but still prohibiting uses such as a community hall because of the potential to impact on the amenity of adjoining residents. That is fair enough, but does that mean that Weston Creek centre would then no longer have any community hall?

**Mr Ponton:** No. That particular reference is to section 75, the rezoning of additional community facilities land. That is being proposed because we heard very strongly during the master planning process that the community wanted to see more community facilities land. In response to the normal statutory processes, the Environment Protection Authority raised concerns, as did some residents nearby, about particular uses that would be permitted under the ordinary provisions of the community facilities zoning, and therefore those additional restrictions were imposed. But on the Territory Plan map there is other community facilities zoned land where, should the government choose to invest in a community hall, we could certainly

identify other land within the group centre vicinity for such a facility.

**MS LAWDER:** On 75 you have planned a community facility. Have you identified the site for the community hall? Is it 67, or it is just that the zoning allows for it?

**Mr Ponton:** No, we have not. The master plan is the framework. Essentially we work with the community to understand needs, and also with industry, the residents and the commercial land holders, to understand how they would like their group centre to develop. The master plan then sets the overarching framework. The Territory Plan variation is but one tool to achieve the master plan aspirations. The other aspect requires investment by the private sector, particularly, but also from government. But these exercises do not necessarily lock in that investment; that would be for the government over a number of years to determine, when the need arises, what it wishes to invest in in relation to those particular services. A master plan is not just about identifying opportunities for government investment. I need to make that clear. It is also to provide opportunities for private sector investment.

**MS LAWDER:** My concern is to ensure that there are some community or public meeting spaces et cetera available.

**Mr Ponton:** Indeed. On the map in front of me there is a large amount of yellow land, community facilities land. It is also important to note that community facilities do not necessarily need to be located just on community facility zoned land. Community facilities can occur within mixed use precincts, so within commercial zoned land. As part of the redevelopment, should the land owners wish to redevelop the centre or invest in commercial, they could actually also invest in community facilities within the commercial centre. So I would argue that there is plenty of opportunity for that investment at a future date should the need arise.

**MS LAWDER:** But the one at 75, the community activity centre with health, welfare or information services, would it be the government investing in that particular facility?

**Mr Ponton:** The government may choose to invest in that, but that may be a decision for a later date. This master plan and the subsequent Territory Plan variation are simply providing the framework to allow the government to make that decision at a future point. This is not about locking in that investment; nor should it be. A master plan tends to provide the framework for a five, 10 or 15-year period, and the Territory Plan variation is about providing the appropriate zoning for that investment to occur at a future date. You can have land zoned community facilities be vacant for 20 years if the need is not there. I think it would be premature for the government to invest unless it were certain that the need existed right now. In summary, these documents are about providing the framework for the government to be able to make those decisions at the right time.

**MS LAWDER:** Do you feel that that is comfort to residents in the vicinity who would like to be assured that there are going to be those types of community facilities?

**Mr Ponton:** This is the second step in the process. The first step was the master plan.

## PROOF

The second step is the government showing its commitment to give effect to the master plan to zone the land appropriately. Then, once the need has been demonstrated, I am sure the government will take decisions that it needs to take in the context of its other budget considerations.

**THE CHAIR:** The community talked at some length about car parking. My understanding is that the two big car parks, the north and south ones, are potentially going to be redeveloped as other things. There does not appear to be much space around for other car parking. What is your expectation of the future of car parking in the area, in Cooleman Court and Weston Creek?

**Mr Ponton:** I start by noting that, should those car parks be redeveloped, then the car parking spaces would need to be replaced. The demand from the development that goes on in those sites would also need to be accommodated. That would most likely be in basement car parking. The issue, and it is certainly an issue that can be overcome, would be how you provide for the transition as you are removing car parks to build new car parks, and then also whether you can make car parks available within the basement before the building is finished. These are certainly things that can be done. These are challenges that could be dealt with through detailed design. But certainly the expectation is that we would not be removing car parks and not having those replaced, and certainly would not be allowing additional commercial space to be built without the demand that that would generate being accommodated on site.

**THE CHAIR:** So practically speaking, as I understand it, you are suggesting that a new development would put a basement or two in which would cater for its own car parking. That seems believable but the question is what happens during the building process when you have not got that basement car park and you have—

**Mr Ponton:** Experience elsewhere has shown that we would work with proponents to look at whether there are opportunities for temporary car parking. I suggest that there would be opportunities in this vicinity for temporary car parking. That is what ordinarily happens. I do not have the answer right now in terms of where that temporary car parking would occur, but certainly as part of the assessment process we would not approve the removal of a car park unless we had a clear picture of what would be occurring in relation to temporary car parking. It is relatively standard practice that you would, through the assessment process, consider those issues. It is a stepped process. You end up with a master plan that is quite high level; the Territory Plan variation, which allows for the investment to occur; and then the statutory assessment process, which deals with the finer-grained detail.

**THE CHAIR:** I appreciate that, but if you know it is not going to work you might as well—so that you do not need to go down as low as fine grain.

**Mr Gentleman:** It has worked previously.

**Mr Ponton:** That is making the assumption that it is not going to work. Our experience has been—

**THE CHAIR:** I did say “if”.

**Mr Ponton:** that there are certainly ways to make it work. It may be that for some of the land around that is vacant, territory-owned land a licence would be provided for a temporary car park and then that land would be rehabilitated once the new car park is built. As I said, you do not have to wait until the park or the site has been redeveloped; you can actually get parking in once the basement is constructed and built above that. There are certainly plenty of opportunities. Experience shows us that there are opportunities for innovation to be applied in these circumstances.

**THE CHAIR:** So you think there is probably going to be temporary car parking in the open space around the area?

**Mr Gentleman:** It is a bit early to put forward planning for car parking that may not occur for 20-odd years. We need to provide the opportunity for these changes to take place from the outcomes of the master plan. Then, when proponents look at those future opportunities, we do the fine-grained planning.

**Mr Ponton:** What this does is provide confidence to the land owners to invest in that finer grained planning. Without the knowledge that there is an opportunity here for them, why would they invest in undertaking the analysis of where they could provide the temporary car parking, how they might provide car parking during construction and how they will provide for the construction contractors who are actually building the new buildings? That analysis takes time and it takes money. Again, in a stepped process, this is just the next step to provide the confidence for people to make those further investments.

**MR MILLIGAN:** In response to one of the submissions about building heights along, I think, Brierly Street and Liardet Street, you mentioned that you are making accommodation for future development within the centre over the next 20 years. What further development can occur in that centre, and what can residents expect to see happen in this area?

**Mr Ponton:** As to what might occur, I think there are some artist's impressions within the master plan itself that demonstrate what the centre could look like with investment over that period of time. As I said, a master plan is not about saying what will happen in the next two years. These are long-term documents. Then the Territory Plan variation gives effect to certain aspects of the master plan. Then we need the private sector to invest. It is about providing the confidence so that the private sector can invest. Over time, as you start to get more investment and more people into these centres, that will only help to facilitate ongoing and further investment. But certainly there are some images in the master plan itself that give an indication of how the area might develop over time.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Can you refer to any of those pages in the master plan?

**Mr Ponton:** On page 2 there is an artist's impression.

**Mr Gentleman:** On page 10.

**Mr Ponton:** Yes, and on page 24.

**MR MILLIGAN:** And that will not affect the hierarchy of group centres?

**Mr Ponton:** Not at all, because the master plan and the Territory Plan variation identify the amount of retail space, as Ms Flanery said earlier: 4,600 square metres. The increased height is in relation to residential, and the hierarchy that you are referring to relates to commercial space.

**MR MILLIGAN:** When more residential moves in, there is probably more demand for commercial space.

**Mr Gentleman:** That is what we have seen, yes.

**Mr Ponton:** The residential will assist in the landholders making the commercial decision to invest in further retail up to that cap of 4,600 referred to. One supports the other and one cannot occur without the other. Well, it can but it is less likely to be successful. Getting additional people into centres helps with public transport and it helps with ensuring the success of retail centres.

**Mr Gentleman:** It also fits in with the views we heard through the statement of planning intent workshops, where the general public in all of the demographics said that they would like to see more density in the territory planning rather than further greenfields development. It fits in with our densification.

**Mr Ponton:** The community, through the minister's statement of planning intent, also said that they would like to see density occurring around local and group centres and town centres. You start to get high densities around those centres, which allows for greater choice. As you move out to the suburbs, people still have the opportunity for single residential. Certainly this response is what we were hearing during those consultations.

**MR MILLIGAN:** These artist's impressions do not necessarily answer the question or provide specific details as to the potential for further development. It is just a visual, isn't it?

**Mr Ponton:** It is but it gives you an indication of what is achievable under the rules within the draft Territory Plan variation. Certainly it is one way. A good architect might come up with an alternative, but there will be some fairly clear parameters in relation to height and use. As I said, the Territory Plan variation is providing for a set amount of commercial space. It is also providing for opportunities for residential and community facilities—

**MR MILLIGAN:** And it is up to the government to provide an environment to attract private industry to invest into that area.

**Mr Ponton:** That is exactly right, yes.

**MR MILLIGAN:** But we are seeing a lot of development happening on the further outskirts of the territory. Will it be too competitive?

**Mr Ponton:** We have our team that looks at the economics of both residential and

retail and the mix, and making sure that we have the right mix. That assists with the land release program. We also have a retail model that is run through the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. We are confident with our modelling and our planning that we are not providing for more retail opportunities than can be accommodated with the resident population. But we are looking to provide opportunities to increase the resident population around the group centre to ensure its success.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Through apartment style living.

**Mr Ponton:** That is right, yes. And that is—

**MR MILLIGAN:** There tends to be a lot of that going up around the territory. You obviously see that there is still going to be a demand for that type of living even into the future.

**Mr Ponton:** That is right. I have lived in recent times in an apartment. What I particularly liked about that was that I could walk downstairs and go to the restaurant where I was living. I did not need to get in the car and go to the Molonglo local centre to go to the restaurant. People who choose apartment living tend to like to be able to walk to retail facilities and walk to public transport. I am not saying this is everybody who lives in an apartment but certainly it is an attraction of apartment and townhouse type development.

**MR MILLIGAN:** We understand why people choose to live in apartments, the attractive appeal of it all. The point I am making is that there is a lot of apartment style development happening in the territory. Is there demand for it and is there still going to be demand for it?

**Mr Ponton:** The short answer is yes, and our modelling is certainly telling us that that is the case. From our modelling in relation to apartment living, townhouse development, we have a fairly good indication of what the community is looking for and what the demand is, and also in relation to our retail model. I make reference again to the housing choices discussion paper that the minister released last week. This is about having that conversation with the community. We know we are providing opportunities for apartment living. We are providing opportunities for single residential and some townhouse development, but is that enough? We are hearing that people want to see a greater mix, a greater choice.

But certainly in terms of what is in the system at the moment we are confident that the Weston group centre could take this type of proposed development. The reality is that, if the market is not quite right now, that investment will not occur this year or next year. But the master plan is not about the next one or two years; it is about the next five, 10, 15 and 20 years.

**MS CHEYNE:** Over the weekend Associate Professor Ben Phillips put out an article about there being a housing oversupply and it being largely made up of apartments, particularly in Belconnen town centre, which drew my attention to it. While I appreciate the market forces argument, market forces have led to there being that kind of mismatch, at least in Belconnen town centre. I have not been intimately involved in

this master plan and draft variation process, obviously, but it would be helpful if you could tell us how the four to six storeys was arrived at from beginning to end. I did note that the master plan had said that the proposal to allow heights to those levels received mixed responses, but it is still where we have landed. I am keen to know more about that modelling apart from market forces.

**Mr Ponton:** I might comment on—

**MS CHEYNE:** There is modelling and then market forces will determine whether that actually ends up happening or not. We do know that in some other town centres it is happening, potentially resulting in a poor outcome.

**Mr Ponton:** That is one view: that it is a poor outcome. In relation to Belconnen, certainly there is a large number of apartments. That means that there are a lot more people living in the Belconnen town centre, which means that you are seeing more investment in retail. Belconnen town centre is a thriving town centre, and others have said that they would like to see their town centre look more like Belconnen. That comes down to the fact that there is a large number of people living within the town centre itself. Some might say it is a poor outcome; others would argue that what you are seeing in Belconnen is a—

**MS CHEYNE:** I think it is more than vacancy rates. Overall there are more people living there, and I am the first person to say that it is a great place to live and very vibrant, but—

**Mr Gentleman:** I think it is much better living on the south side.

**MS CHEYNE:** Of course you do, minister.

**THE CHAIR:** Weston is on the south side.

**MS CHEYNE:** Yes, indeed.

**Mr Ponton:** Those apartments are still selling; and in terms of new proposals that are being marketed, people are still buying. That would suggest that there is still a market for development in Belconnen town centre. Having said that, we do keep a very close watch on what is selling and how long it takes for properties to sell; then we adjust the land release program accordingly. We do not want to be selling sites to market if we know that there is still a five-year supply in the pipeline. These are things that are finely balanced.

As I said, we have a team of experts who love looking at numbers, who analyse this on a daily basis. I am sure that at some point they can sit on this side of the room and provide you with more detail on that, maybe at estimates hearings next year.

**Mr Gentleman:** It is worthwhile, too, considering that if you look at the way the Territory Plan functions within residential use, RZ1 is 81 per cent of all residential use. There is quite a high number of single dwelling blocks across the territory.

**Mr Ponton:** In terms of why it is five storeys, I might ask one of my colleagues to

comment more on that.

**MS CHEYNE:** I am just interested in the consultation processes, why that was proposed and what was landed at.

**Mr Ponton:** The only comment I would make is that I would expect that during the consultation process there was also analysis around overshadowing, yields and the like to ensure that redevelopment would be of interest to those who would be making an investment. I will see if somebody can talk a bit more about the detailed analysis as to why five storeys.

**Ms Kaucz:** I suppose, looking at the heights, it is to try to get that balance, particularly for the mixed use, because you can have commercial and retail but also some of the residential, and, as Mr Ponton was saying, encouraging people to live in the centre. The heights give you that extra few levels of residential with retail and potentially office in between. It is just helping to give that mix of uses.

**MS CHEYNE:** Is it also making it attractive to developers?

**Ms Kaucz:** Yes; they would have that ability to have those heights and to have those sorts of developments. But the reason to encourage more people living in the centre is to increase things like passive surveillance and more activity in the evenings so that it is not just an area people go to during the day to go to the shops and go to work and then leave and it is vacant at night. Having a larger resident population in the centre helps with those safety issues as well.

That was part of what was looked at in the master plan process, and then just the different heights, the different areas that were assessed, what was considered to be an appropriate height. That was discussed with the community. Yes, some parts of the community expressed some concern about the heights, wanting more four to five, but it is five to six storeys in the majority, particularly where the two car parks are currently. That is up to six storeys and then five storeys. Where you have the existing community facility site, that could be up to six storeys, and that was deemed to be appropriate. You have that sort of interaction with the open space and the linkages to the existing group centre. They were the considerations.

**MS LAWDER:** Apologies if this came up while I was out of the room, but I notice that on one of the maps in the master plan, on page 40, it talks about Weston oval, either revitalising Weston oval or perhaps turning it into wetlands. Was that something that was talked about quite a bit during the consultation process?

**Mr Gentleman:** There was quite a bit of discussion on a recreational precinct in the master plan, and also the community precinct, so looking at precinct characters for the commercial core precinct, the services precinct and separate precincts for recreational uses and community precincts. The recreational precinct would continue to be composed of low-scale outdoor recreational uses such as ovals, outdoor sporting facilities and informal recreational uses. In relation to consultation on the oval itself, Mr Ponton may be able to help.

**MS LAWDER:** I just wonder what the demand was for wetlands.

**Mr Ponton:** During the various engagement activities, we heard from the community that they would be supportive of a possible wetland. That is why it was included in the master plan as a potential investment at a later date. But just coming back to my earlier comment, Ms Lawder, the master plan provides the framework for that future investment: it is not to say that that is going to happen this year or next year; it was simply reflecting what we were hearing from the community as a possibility, a possible use. It gives the government a fairly good steer, should it be able to invest in that particular locality in relation to recreational facilities, as to what the community might be looking for.

**MS LAWDER:** A related question is about possibly reinstating the oval back to a more usable state. I think the comment in here was that it is currently not being irrigated. There is the question of what the demand may be for an oval. Are more ovals being put in in the Molonglo area as it is being developed?

**Mr Ponton:** I am going to turn my mind back to the consultation. I recall that we were looking at the overall demand and working with our colleagues in what was then sport and recreation services around what would be required within Weston and Molonglo. As I recall, that is what prompted this as a possibility, particularly around the topography in Molonglo Valley, as to what might be achievable for a future oval. This, as I recall, was put on the table because there were some challenges in relation to providing an oval in the Molonglo Valley, but it was certainly considered in the overall context of the region. I am just going to make sure my understanding, my recollection, is correct.

**Ms Kaucz:** Yes. During the development of the master plans, one of the options investigated with the community and consultants involved was looking at potential for a wetland. We also looked at other uses such as other recreation uses—it is not a particularly utilised area at the moment—and what there could be in the future. As has been mentioned, this is setting the framework, the zoning that is given to it. Then a change in the Territory Plan variation allows for those uses. It is just a matter of, over time, what is appropriate for the needs of the community.

**Mr Ponton:** If it came to pass that, for the region of Weston and Molonglo, a new oval were required, this certainly provides the government with the framework to proceed in this location. But if it came to pass that there were an alternative site within the Molonglo Valley, and the government for various reasons chose to invest there, you could certainly look at it again. As I said, this is a framework for what might happen.

**MS LAWDER:** So in the future, taking a crystal ball approach, if it became a wetland, and it talks about improving the water quality of the local stormwater catchment, where would that stormwater go? Does it go down to the new Molonglo ponds? Do you know?

**Mr Ponton:** I might have to take that on notice. I suspect so. I suspect the answer would be that it would drain into—

**MS LAWDER:** Ponds? Is that we call them? Lake? The ones at Molonglo.

**Mr Ponton:** Ponds.

**Ms Flanery:** We will come back to you about exactly where it goes.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to go to page 44 in the draft master plan. We have two different bus hierarchies here. I appreciate that there has probably been more work done on the routes since that, but is there provision for something which resembles a bus interchange? It would appear that Weston is likely to have the intersection of a rapid route and suburban routes.

**Mr Gentleman:** I think that is work that the directorate is doing with TCCS as they move to plan for the future rapid networks across the ACT. Mr Ponton?

**Mr Ponton:** Keeping in mind, Ms Le Couteur, that this was a point in time, 2014—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. I appreciate that this is unlikely to be what is actually happening, but I was wondering if you had done some more work.

**Mr Ponton:** Indeed. We continue to work very closely with our colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services with the investment in light rail and the work that is being undertaken for light rail stage 2. Our colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services will need to be continually thinking about the way the bus network will operate once the new infrastructure comes online. In addition to that, they will need to be thinking about how they reinvest those bus kilometres that would otherwise have been utilised where the light rail is occurring. That work is all underway. In terms of a specific as to what will be happening exactly in this location, I would have to take it on notice and confer further with our colleagues in Transport Canberra.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. And I have a question on industrial trades, one of the things the community council's submission said they were confused about. I am confused. What exactly is the plan here?

**Mr Ponton:** Sorry, industrial?

**THE CHAIR:** Industrial trades has been added as a permissible use in the shopping centre site. We are just wondering what was envisaged.

**Mr Gentleman:** This is where we could have tyre-fitting places.

**Ms Kaucz:** Car washes. The existing provision allows for car washing and those types of uses. It is between a normal commercial use and industrial: low impact, semi-industrial. There is a definition of industrial trades in the Territory Plan that any application would have to meet. It means "the use of land for the selling, hiring, inspection or servicing of goods or materials for industrial, agricultural, construction, transport or like purposes" where they need a large area and potentially would have some impact similar to industry but not to the extent that an industrial use would have.

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**THE CHAIR:** Minister and officials, thank you all very much for your contributions this afternoon. As normal, the transcript will be sent to you as soon as possible. There were some questions taken on notice, I believe. Responses to questions taken on notice should be submitted to the committee office within five days of the proof transcript becoming available.

**The committee adjourned at 1.56 pm.**