



Why is ACT Housing not delivering acceptable public housing?

With a budget of more than \$1 billion over 10 years, you might think that Housing ACT (HACT) would be able to deliver a first-class program of public housing. From the recent experience in Griffith-Narrabundah, you would be mistaken.

Late last year, HACT lodged three separate Development Applications (DAs) to demolish existing dwellings in the lowest density residential zone and replace them with three dwellings per block in the Supportive Housing category.

These were at 77 Captain Cook Crescent and 18 Lockyer Street in Griffith and 32 Sturt Ave in Narrabundah.

Let's look at the Captain Cook proposal.

In October 2021 HACT distributed a flyer to local residents saying that the existing dwelling would be demolished and replaced by three 'Adaptable Housing' dwellings.

When the DA was submitted, 'Adaptable' had changed to 'Supportive' because the planning rules allow three dwellings on a block. This cannot be done with Adaptable Housing.

The DA did not comply with the planning rules even though HACT has stated that "*All HACT designs follow the requirements of the Territory Plan.*" Both ACTPLA and the GNCA identified several flaws in the DA. ACTPLA approved the development with several changes required to the original DA.

In December, GNCA lodged an appeal to ACAT, based on the view that the revised proposal did not meet the planning requirements. On 17 December ACAT scheduled a Directions Hearing for 17 January 2022.

On 12 January HACT advised ACTPLA that it had surrendered the approval of the DA. ACTPLA asked GNCA to withdraw its application for review. GNCA declined because it had no evidence that HACT had surrendered the DA. Unfortunately, the required surrender form, which would have provided the reason for the surrender, was not completed by HACT. HACT has provided no reason for surrendering the DA, and HACT has refused to meet with us. What a waste of resources for those involved in the preparing and reviewing the DA.

At 32 Sturt Avenue, the DA, which was also submitted in 2021, included a demolition plan, as well as the three new dwellings.

So, what happened?

On Friday 4 February, before the ACTPLA had decided whether to approve the application to demolish and replace the existing building, a bulldozer was positioned on site.

Furthermore, with no notice, or permission, workers for the demolition team trespassed on the next-door property and again on Monday 7 January, to access utilities. These cannot be accessed from the site because the whole property is overgrown by foliage.



Late of the Friday afternoon, despite a formal complaint lodged with Access Canberra earlier that day, and without any warning to neighbours, the bulldozer demolished the existing building. It is evident from the attached picture that the dust containment measures were inadequate.

Unfortunately, this sort of behaviour does not help HACT's reputation.

It's time it thought more about the people affected by the new developments, not just the community residents who are being compressed into second-rate dwellings but also the residents and neighbours.

The cloak of secrecy adopted by HACT only makes matters worse. It results in tenants being considered as people who need to be specially protected.

Unfortunately, the maintenance program for community housing is not working as well as it could be, and this just exacerbates the situation. If you live in a house that is not maintained properly, there is no incentive to look after the property.

It's time for a change in culture in the HACT.

