

# **Griffith Narrabundah Community Association Inc.**

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## **Building Better Suburbs**

The Griffith Narrabundah Community Association was established in 2000. We have nearly 300 members, and our core business is *“to protect the amenity and interests of the Griffith and Narrabundah communities, particularly in relation to the preservation of community facilities and open space.”* We therefore welcome the opportunity to provide input to the Building Better Suburbs project by addressing the four key issues of most concern to us.

### **Maintain and expand our urban forest**

The increase in the number of larger dwellings covering a higher proportion of the block in the inner suburbs of Canberra has seen a significant reduction in the urban forest. Owners of new, larger dwellings appear to be attracted to the leafy nature of the area, but paradoxically degrade the leafy environment to the detriment of established residents. On the basis of a very limited sample, we estimate that Griffith-Narrabundah alone has lost more than 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> of land that used to be available for vegetation over the last 10 years. Our streetscapes are increasingly dominated by buildings rather than tree canopies.

There is considerable research evidence that trees can substantially reduce temperatures when compared with untreed areas. Retention of an urban forest through a vigorous program of planting and replanting large deciduous street trees would not only enhance liveability, but would be consistent with reduced energy usage and the Government’s climate change targets.

### **Increased waste recycling**

The government’s aspirational target of recovering or recycling 90 per cent of waste by 2024-25 is commendable, but greater realism is required if it is to be achieved. Since 2005, the trend in recovery levels has declined from 75 per cent to 68 per cent.

A rigorous cost-effectiveness study needs to be carried out to determine the best long-term strategy for waste management. More particularly, better information is required on why residents have reduced their recycling rates, whether recycling is sustainable in the face of falling market prices for recycled materials, and the likely long-term effects of toxic emissions from incineration of sewage and municipal waste. Consideration should also be given to imposing fines on residents putting rubbish in the wrong bins.

### **Integrated transport systems throughout Canberra**

There are too many *ad hoc* developments proceeding without proper consideration of the resulting increases in traffic flows and demand for off-street parking. All future developments should comply in full with the requirements for off-street parking for residents and visitors.

An “unseen” problem is that each developer who is permitted to avoid full on-site residential parking guidelines adds a little more to street and traffic congestion. Because there is no overall plan, the cumulative effect of all the relatively minor exemptions from full on-site parking is to produce an unsustainable situation for residents and visitors. Kingston is a case in point.

The re-development of Canberra Avenue and Manuka (including the Stuart Flats) is also being approached in piece-meal fashion without any overall plan to cater for off street parking and increased traffic flows. This is unconscionable, particularly as Canberra Avenue is at, or very close to, its reasonable carrying capacity during peak hours. The usual response to this situation is for surplus traffic to spill over onto a parallel road, but the area’s unique street layout precludes this solution. A Master Plan for the whole of Canberra’s Inner South should be produced as soon as possible, based firmly on genuine community consultation.

Commonwealth Avenue Bridge is Canberra’s busiest road, carrying about 68,000 cars per day and is part of a well-designed and well-functioning road system. But traffic flows can only be expected to increase with the growth of population. At present, there are four exits available before City Hill for northbound vehicles. If the current plan proposed by the NCA is implemented, each of these exits will be controlled by traffic lights. Impeding currently smooth-flowing traffic along Commonwealth Avenue is a bizarre notion. The ACT Government should inform the NCA that this proposal is completely unacceptable.

#### **Protect trees and verges during construction and sporting events**

Compliance by builders and developers with rules to protect trees and to prevent soil compaction on verges is patchy. Recalcitrant builders are destroying community assets – and thereby increasing the burden on ratepayers – in order to cut costs and increase their private financial gain. One solution would be to impose significant fines or to require large deposits to encourage better compliance.

We would strongly support a requirement for EPSD to provide TCCS with timely notification of all DA-exempt developments. There is no logical reason why DA exemption – which relates to the building itself – should be extended in practice to immunity from adherence to legislation covering protection of trees on public land. We would also strongly encourage the Government to increase the number of Rangers.

We would be pleased to provide more information on each of these four key issues at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely  
Leo Dobes  
President  
15 November 2017