

Griffith/Narrabundah Community Association Inc.

MEDIA RELEASE

CANBERRANS NEED CERTAINTY AND TRUST WHEN PURCHASING A FAMILY HOME, NOT HIGHER DENSITY DEVELOPMENTS IN THEIR BACKYARDS

The Griffith/Narrabundah Community Association (GNCA) claims the ACT Government, has found a way to breach existing residential planning regulations to allow medium density developments throughout Canberra suburbs currently zoned for low-rise, low-density residential housing (RZ1). This is being done under the pretext of an architectural design project called the 'Demonstration Housing Project, which selects housing designs that could be used for 'high quality, medium density infill' (RZ2). The Territory Plan is then varied to allow this to happen in RZ1 zones. The blocks have not been chosen for their locations; they could be anywhere in the suburbs.

Once the precedent has been set for rezoning, there is little to stop the government turning most of Griffith and other suburbs into higher density areas. In effect, turning RZ1 zones into an RZ2 Swiss Cheese, with no one able to forecast where the next development will appear.

Five projects have been selected for evaluation. Four sites are situated in (RZ1) zones, in Griffith, Ainslie, Lyneham and Weston, and one in a low-medium density (RZ2) zone in Forrest.

The design approved for Griffith (misleadingly called the 'Manor House') consists of four units on a single block where, under current rules only one dwelling is normally permitted.

With over 600 new units and townhouses being built in Manuka and at Gowrie Court, together with more than 300 new dwellings in the local retirement villages, the area is already experiencing a large increase in diversity of housing stock and urban infill. Why do we need more?

The largest investment for most families is the purchase of a home. Families need certainty and trust in the planning system. It is crucial they know what could be built on the blocks next to them. They do not want the surprise of a four-unit, two-story, apartment-style dwelling built next door, impacting on their privacy and amenity.

Many residents living in RZ1 zones such as those in Griffith, are concerned that changing the rules to allow for the construction of units will reduce the value of existing houses and increase the noise and local traffic in the street.

There is no reason why four dwellings should be allowed on a single block in an RZ1 zone. The GNCA believes these concepts should be trialled in zones where the proposals would be compliant.

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