

Griffith/Narrabundah Community Action Group

PO Box 4127 Manuka ACT 2603

Volume 6

NEWSLETTER

31 May 2001

Please make a submission on the Draft Development Control Plan

The period for public comment on the Draft Development Control Plan (DDCP) that proposes to demolish the Griffith Library building and take away more than half of Throsby Park for residential and commercial development closes on **Tuesday 12 June**. Hopefully you received our information package.

We now have **over 750 members** and we must all let the government know that we want to retain our open space, Throsby Park, our library service and our community facilities. This is the most critical period in our fight to stop the government from bullying us into surrendering the heart of our community.

If we don't take action NOW, the community will lose:

- A library without any guarantee of a replacement
- A school building (worth millions) and a school site
- Open space (over half of Throsby Park)
- Over 75 trees. Over 45 in Throsby Park and over 30 on the library site. Historically significant trees are also threatened.
- A community meeting hall from the O'Connell Centre
- A well-loved children's playground in Throsby Park
- Studio Map, the arts education studio behind the shops
- The educational functions of the O'Connell Centre and customers that help to keep our shopping centre viable
- Maybe even the O'Connell Centre building itself

The ACT Government has misled us about a replacement library

At the last Public Information Meetings held on 10 April, the Speaker of the Assembly Greg Cornwell announced "I have phoned the Minister, and the Minister said that if the people want the library on Section 78, then it will be on Section 78." Most people at those meetings accepted the assurance, and as a result the issue of a replacement library was de-fused. Most of the submissions made to date on the DDCP were made in the belief that this commitment was sincere. **We have found out it is not sincere.**

When we sought confirmation in writing, we were shocked to find that Minister Smyth's offer applied only as part of a package. It is conditional on the community accepting all of the government's residential and commercial development proposals. Minister Smyth's 7 May letter to us says

"If the results of this process indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents support retention of the library on Section 78, the Government will support that outcome. However a library will only be retained as part of the implementation of the entire DCP, which ensures an integrated approach to determining the best mix of uses for the entire site."

Minister Smyth's threat that the community can only have the library if residents are prepared to accept all of the government's development proposals is **totally unacceptable**.

What you can do:

Please make a submission **before 12 June**, and ask your friends and neighbours to do so. If you didn't get our information package, please call us and we'll get one to you immediately. You can use the form letter that is in the package, or better yet, write your own letter. Please say that you support retention of a library on Section 78. The DDCP is available at the Griffith Library or the PALM Shopfront, 16 Challis St, Dickson or on PALM's website: www.palm.act.gov.au/consultation/discussion_papers/index
Send your submissions to:

Ms Ravi Singh
Planning and Land Management (PALM)
GPO Box 1908
Canberra ACT 2601

No good justification for this plan

- **Inappropriate Infill:** No developer's infill should be allowed on community land or parkland as a matter of principle. Our community land and facilities and library and Throsby Park should be retained for the entire community, for current and future generations, not sold off for the benefit of just a few. This area is already under-provided in useable open space.
- **No Good Planning:** The government and consultants admit that they have not done any planning studies or assessments of current or future needs for community facilities, schools, school sites or alternative community uses for the site. They said such studies won't be done for at least five years. Why rush into selling off valuable public assets without any good planning?
- **Retaining schools and schools sites:** When many schools were closed in the early 90s, the government made a promise to retain school buildings and school sites in case schools were needed in the future. The government and its consultants now propose selling off a school building and a school site, yet they admit they have not done any studies of future school needs. At the 10 April Public Information Session, a resident said that the government could open a primary school right now with the 150 or so overflow students from Red Hill and Forrest Primary Schools.
- **No need for housing on this site:** Over 2500 medium density housing options will be available in this area within the next few years, which should be adequate to meet market demands.
- **No Proper Market Survey:** They only give anecdotal evidence that "some people" have expressed an interest in living in townhouses in this area. When asked exactly how many people had expressed interest, the consultants said "two or three". Should the community lose its community land and facilities and Throsby Park just to satisfy a few people?
- **The "No Development Option":** Contrary to their previous assurances, they said they had done no further work on the "no development option" that would have enhanced our community facilities and parkland instead of selling them off.
- **What happened to "better maintained" open space?:** They said we should trade off a larger area of poorly maintained open space for "a smaller but better maintained" open space. Now they admit that the agency responsible for maintenance, Canberra Urban Parks and Places, will not agree to maintain the open space any better than it is being maintained now. =>



POLITICIAN WATCH: What your elected Molonglo representatives have said:

We have written letters to all seven of the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in the Molonglo Electorate to ask each for his/her position on Section 78. Here are the responses we have received to date. The next ACT election is Saturday, 20 October 2001.

Liberal Party of Australia

Gary Humphries..... **NO RESPONSE AT ALL.**

Greg Cornwell..... **NO RESPONSE AT ALL.**

Jacqui Burke..... See letter.

Australian Labor Party

Simon Corbell..... See letter.

Ted Quinlan..... See letter.

The ACT Greens

Kerrie Tucker..... See letter.

Moore Independents

Michael Moore..... **NO RESPONSE AT ALL.**

[Editor's Note: Letters are published in order of receipt.]

Letter from Ted Quinlan MLA, Labor Member for Molonglo, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, 23 January 2001

Thank you very much for your letter regarding the proposed development at Section 78 Griffith.

Labor does not and will not support the change of purpose of Section 78 from urban open space to anything that would allow a residential development to be built. We have always supported the retention of our public, green spaces to ensure the beautiful character of the city and suburbs is not lost to residential development.

While there are opportunities for development and redevelopment throughout Canberra, I do not believe Section 78 is an appropriate site for such a development. I understand at present, consultants are preparing a report for Government on the various options available for Section 78 and once the report is completed, I would expect a further round of community consultation.

As far as Section 78 is concerned, it will remain for community purposes and will not be developed while Labor ever holds Government.

In relation to the issue of the library, I support retention of library services for Griffith and Narrabundah residents and should demand dictate, the construction of a purpose built library.

Thank you for your letter and be assured that I will continue to do all I can to preserve these valuable areas of space for the residents of Griffith.

Letter from Kerrie Tucker MLA, ACT Greens Member for Molonglo, 15 May 2001

The Greens welcome this opportunity to contribute to the debate over the future of Section 78 Griffith as it is a reflection of a broader debate over urban redevelopment that is happening across Canberra.

The Government's approach to urban redevelopment has been arrogant and dollar-driven. The Greens believe that there needs to be a more strategic approach that takes into account Canberra's existing planning structure of decentralised towns and the environmental and recreational value of its open space. Just increasing the density of housing in existing areas to address the problems of suburban sprawl generates its own local environmental impacts. We believe that higher density housing should be concentrated in the existing commercial centres where there is already the infrastructure to support this style of housing. It should not be spread in an ad hoc way through our suburbs.

While much of the land in Section 78 is not formally zoned as open space because it was originally part of the school grounds, it has functioned as public open space for many years and is highly valued by the local community. The Greens do not support development on this open space. We are also not convinced that the existing school buildings should be sold off because the Government has done no analysis of the future needs for community facilities in inner Canberra.

These buildings are a valuable government asset and we would prefer that they continue to be used for some community purpose. The Griffith Library in particular provides a valuable service to the South Canberra community and I would not want that service to be downgraded in any way.

There is already a considerable supply of higher density housing in nearby Kingston and the new Foreshores development. We don't need to have this type of development all over the inner south destroying its existing character.

The Greens are prepared to take appropriate action in the Assembly to protect the open space quality of this area. ⇒

Letter from Jacqui Burke MLA, Liberal Member for Molonglo, 16 May 2001

As one of the local members for Molonglo, including Griffith and Narrabundah, I have become increasingly interested in the proposed revitalisation to Section 78, Griffith. As the Draft development Control Plan will be out for public consultation until the 12th June 2001. As the process is just about half-way the Government will not be making any announcements until all feedback has been received.

Planning in the ACT is an extremely important issue and effects [sic] us all at some time or other. My desire is to see Canberra grow and develop in a dynamic yet balanced way in order to ensure that we are able to preserve as much of our beautiful environment as is possible, whilst catering for the growing, new and varying needs of a changing population.

In order to ensure that communities feel very much part of the process, this Government is committed to community consultation to improve and develop better community precincts for everyone. Community consultation, as you would be aware, is highly effective and useful. We want and need to know what you would like to see in your community.

I am looking forward to the opportunity of working with everyone to make Canberra a better place in which to work, live and play. I want to see Canberra as a place that easily embraces change and new ideas to the benefit of us all. Together we can achieve this.

I am more than happy to personally discuss my position and I can be contacted in my office on 6205 0131 or at burke@act.gov.au

Letter from Simon Corbell MLA, Labor Member for Molonglo, Shadow Minister for Planning and Land Management, 30 May 2001

As Shadow Minister for Planning, I am pleased to advise you of the Australian Labor Party's position in relation to the ACT Liberal Government's proposed residential and commercial development of Section 78, Griffith.

Labor will not support any variation to the Territory Plan which permits redevelopment of Section 78 for residential or commercial purposes. Labor supports the continued retention of this land for community facilities as currently designated on the Territory Plan.

In Labor's view this land should remain as a central, publicly accessible area which is able to provide the broadest possible range of community facilities to the Griffith/Narrabundah area as the suburbs continue to evolve and renew. Labor particularly recognises the significance of the open space existing on this site.

As you may be aware ACT Labor's Planning Policy for the 2001 election proposes an extensive audit be conducted of Canberra's Open Space Network, in consultation with all Canberrans. Once the extent of our Open Space Network is fully established, Labor would seek to entrench it in the Territory Plan. This process would ensure that open space could only be built on following a two-thirds vote of the Legislative Assembly. Labor considers that the open space at Griffith, Section 78, should be considered as part of this process.

Labor will continue to demand a better planning process for Section 78, Griffith. In particular Labor will continue to insist upon a broad, strategic analysis of the demand for community facility land in Canberra. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or assistance on this matter.

Our Local Area Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC) supports us

The Manuka LAPAC for Inner South Canberra covers Barton, Forrest, Griffith, Kingston, Narrabundah and Red Hill. On 7 May 2001, they sent a letter to Minister Brendan Smyth asking him to "defer, for the time being, consideration at any level of government of proposals to vary the Territory Plan in relation to Section 78 Griffith" (and two other proposals). The Manuka LAPAC said

"At the outset, we wish to emphasise that the Manuka LAPAC is not necessarily opposed to good quality urban infill and medium-density development in appropriate locations. But we are strongly opposed to the current development free-for-all, the breakdown of the planning process, and the threat to the garden city character of established areas." [Pg. 1]

"Parks and ovals are being downgraded, or in the case of Section 78 Griffith, have been earmarked for more yardless, family-unfriendly residential development." [Pg. 2]

"The consultants' study of the future of Section 78 Griffith...demonstrates the superficiality of the consultation process. Whilst the consultants insist "there is no predetermined position on the type or amount of development" that might occur on Section 78, their client certainly has." [Pg. 4]

Can you help your community group?

We would greatly appreciate some help doing letter box drops of our newsletters, and occasionally other information. If you think you could help, please call Trish Bootes at 6295 9663.

Our Goals are clear:

1. The retention of our community facilities for now and the future.
2. The preservation of our community open space.
3. The retention of our library service.
4. Opposition to any development that is inconsistent with our other goals, including that which would involve varying the Territory Plan in order to re-zone the land.

Griffith/Narrabundah Community Action Group, Contact Information:

President	Margaret Fanning	6295 0997
Vice-President	Trish Bootes	6295 9663
Secretary	Iain Macinnis	6295 8610
Treasurer	Frank Mestrov	6295 1152
Exec Committee Member	David Palmer	6295 9759

**Please make a submission before
12 June. Thank you for your support.**