



Mick Gentleman MLA

Manager of Government Business
Minister for Planning and Land Management
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Corrections
Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety

Member for Brindabella

21/482

Mr Tom Duncan
Clerk
ACT Legislative Assembly
By email: tom.duncan@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mr Duncan *Tom*

Thank you for your letter of 3 August 2021 providing petition No. 16-21 lodged by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA about planning, land release and development in Gungahlin town centre (the petition).

I am pleased that the continued planning and future development of the Gungahlin town centre has been of particular interest and focus of the Legislative Assembly over this year through debate, two resolutions and now this petition.

In addition, I note that Draft Variation to Territory Plan No. 364 (Gungahlin town centre) (DV364), which proposes changes to planning controls in part of the town centre, is currently subject to an inquiry by the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services (the Committee). On 30 September 2021, the Standing Committee released its report into the draft variation, which includes 8 recommendations that the Government will consider.

Noting that the Government has four months to formally respond to the report (by 30 January 2022), I take this opportunity to provide a response to the specific matters raised by the petition.

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Land sales/auctions in Gungahlin and the town centre

I am advised that the SLA met with Gungahlin Community Council executive on 4 May 2021 in response to their request to halt all land sales in the Gungahlin Town Centre. I understand that the SLA offered to engage with the Community Council and other stakeholders via a placemaking approach for the remaining town centre land releases, however, the SLA remained committed to auctioning the sites on 12 May 2021. The auction proceeded and the sites were sold, several months before the petition was subsequently lodged with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

I note that the SLA has also offered the opportunity to work with the Gungahlin Community Council and the wider Gungahlin community on how the sale of future blocks, consistent with the Government's Indicative Land Release Program, are brought to the market, the provision of open space and the interface with the linear park and future public realm.

Inquiry into DV364 and Assembly Resolution of 10 February 2021

As I noted above, the Committee has now tabled a report in response to the inquiry into DV364 and the Government will now consider the recommendations made. The changes to the Territory Plan proposed through the variation were the result of considered planning work and extensive community engagement. While I note that the petition called for investigation into reasons for what was characterised as a 'significant reduction of commercial zoning resulting from DV364', I am satisfied that the Committee process provides the relevant and appropriate scrutiny called for.

Concurrently with my response to this petition as Minister for Planning and Land Management, I am tabling the Government's response to Legislative Assembly resolutions of 10 February 2021, moved by Ms Orr MLA, and of 2 June 2021, moved by Mr Braddock MLA. In this way, all relevant matters before the Assembly on the planning and future development of the Gungahlin town centre are responded to in a manner that allows clear consideration.

Objectives of the Gungahlin District Community and Recreational Facilities Assessment

I confirm that the objectives of the Gungahlin District Community and Recreational Facilities Assessment are to:

- determine the study area's current and future demand for community and recreation facilities and identify gaps in service provision;
- identify blocks of vacant ACT Government owned land in areas within the district of Gungahlin that may be suitable for full market value community uses and community concessional uses and recreational uses;
- recommend which community use, or mix of community uses, are most suitable for the vacant blocks identified, making particular delineation between full market value and community concessional uses, and provide advice about which site(s) could be prioritised for community use; and
- provide commentary on the most appropriate community or recreational use/s for Blocks 12 and 13 Section 132 Casey and the proposed Gungahlin Community Centre including size requirements.

Develop a strategy to attract business to be established in the Gungahlin town centre

The petition called upon Government to develop a strategy to encourage businesses to be established in the Gungahlin town centre. I am pleased to advise that the Government is in the process of developing an employment prospectus on the benefits of Gungahlin and the town centre

to support further economic development in the region. This prospectus will be provided to the Commonwealth Finance Minister.

More broadly, I would also like to provide the following advice on a range of matters that Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) are progressing in and around the Gungahlin town centre:

- The 2020-21 Budget provided \$0.3 million for improvements at Yerrabi Pond and \$45 million to better connect Belconnen and Gungahlin.
- A route planning study to improve cycle connectivity in the Gungahlin Town Centre, and to invest in a sophisticated traffic model to identify future transport improvements in the Gungahlin region is being considered.
- As surface carparks are developed, TCCS makes sure that these locations deliver their development parking requirements as required by the Territory Plan.
- The ACT Government has an ambitious target to plant over 450,000 trees on public land over the next 25 years, which will include more trees for Gungahlin. More details are identified through the Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2045. Since 2018, Urban Treescapes have removed 7 dead or dying trees, and 13 new trees have been planted. 100 potential planting sites within the study area have been identified and 25 of these locations will receive a planting during spring 2021.
- In association with improvements including Light Rail and Hibberson Street upgrade, the town centre has seen the installation of more bins, street furniture, and active maintenance of garden beds and points of interest. The centre square playspace received new nature play elements, rubber soft fall, a birds nest swing and fencing.
- TCCS are committed to active maintenance and ongoing improvement through its regular servicing program, as well as identified capital works projects.
- Based on the community feedback on Yerrabi Ponds from the public consultation (April - June 2021), the ACT Government will further investigate improved paths, more facilities such as seating and bins, enhanced landscaping, better parking arrangements and amenities to bring the community together such as access to power for social events.

Community consultations about future land use

As reflected in the Government response to the resolutions of 10 February 2021 and 2 June 2021, the Government agrees that engagement with the community on the future of the town centre and on individual proposed developments is important.

As the responsible Minister, I note the extensive engagement that has been supported to date in relation to Gungahlin, including through the Gungahlin town centre planning refresh and consultation on DV364.


The ACT Government through the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) has commenced the ACT Planning System Review and Reform Project (the Project), which is the first comprehensive review of the planning system in over 10 years. The objectives of the project and reiterated in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly, include to improve built form, place design and public realm outcomes across the Territory.

The Project will support implementation of a district approach to strategic planning to bridge the gap between ACT-wide and local area planning. This approach will include the development of District Strategies to identify the defining features of each district, what it is that sets them apart and that

will help to shape resilient and strong individual districts that deliver a range of lifestyle choices for current and future Canberrans. The development of these strategies provides further opportunity for the setting of that defining character for the district of Gungahlin and I note workshops on this topic have already occurred.

Thank you for referring this petition of 3 August 2021 to me. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely


Mick Gentleman MLA
9/11/2021

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