

# PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND HERITAGE

## A NEW PLAN FOR CANBERRA

### INTRODUCTION

Canberra needs a new planning system, and much better development.

The ACT Greens are committed to creating a city that supports our community needs, green space and urban heritage.

To do this, our planning system must deliver well designed, affordable, sustainable housing, and give the community a real say in how their neighbourhood develops.

### WHY DO WE NEED A NEW PLAN?

Canberra is changing, and not always for the better.

Too often, we've seen the community's voice ignored, leading to poorly designed, unsustainable, low-quality development.

This fails to protect our urban tree canopy and green space needs, undermines our urban heritage and privileges developers over the people that live in a neighbourhood.

Our planning and development system needs serious reform, to prevent:

- Poorly designed and constructed, unsustainable, low-quality new apartments that do not meet community expectations,
- The destruction of our tree canopy, green spaces, heritage, views and neighbourhood aesthetics
- Frustrating, bureaucratic processes that inhibit community participation and common sense decision-making
- People being unable to afford to live in the neighbourhood that forms their community

## OUR PLAN TO LEAD THE NATION ON THE QUALITY OF DEVELOPMENT

The ACT Greens will build on Canberra's history as a planned city and strong expertise in sustainable design to lead the nation in quality urban development.

By bringing people together to find solutions, we will protect the things Canberrans love about our city - our trees, green space and heritage - while providing more affordable, sustainable and attractive housing fit for climate change and a 21st Century city.

The Greens plan will:

- Substantially lift the quality and sustainability of the design and construction of new developments
- Give the community a real say in how their neighbourhood develops
- Better protect our trees and green space
- Ensure the planning and housing system delivers affordable housing that is environmentally friendly, maintains green space and fits in with our urban heritage
- Better protect Canberra's heritage, including viewlines and national heritage areas

### **We will achieve these goals through a series of practical reforms, including:**

- Setting a 10 year pathway to shift to world's best practice on climate-ready and environmentally-sustainable buildings
- Changing land sales legislation so that major sites are sold for high-quality proposals, not just to the highest bidder
- Ensuring land release will include at least one 'showcase' demonstration per year that pilots a major step forward in innovative sustainable development
- Returning building certification of multi-unit residential developments to government control, and include all developments where builders or major subcontractors have been the subject of regulatory action by Access Canberra or WorkSafe
- Ensuring the planning review focuses on quality, community engagement, affordable housing and protecting our trees and green space
- Delivering a "community compact" process to find ways to encourage affordable housing while protecting our trees, green space and heritage. The compact will bring together residents' groups, younger people, government and developers
- Reach a 30% urban tree canopy across Canberra by changing the Tree Protection Act and planning system to protect our mature trees and make room for trees during development
- Funding the heritage system to shift from reactive to proactive, so it can protect the things we love about Canberra

## DEVELOPMENT THAT IS WELL DESIGNED AND WELL BUILT

### MAJOR REFORM OF LAND RELEASE

ACT Government land release is a unique lever for delivering the quality of development our community wants. A major overhaul of the land release process will reward quality development that benefits the community and the environment.

The ACT Greens will **change land sales legislation so that major sites\* are sold for high-quality proposals**, not just to the highest bidder.

All major sites on the Land Release program will be reviewed and preferred **design, environmental and social outcomes will be set for each site before it is released**. These outcomes will be included in the sale process so that developers know what they are aiming for.

To drive a new standard of development, **land release will include at least one 'showcase' development per year that pilots a big step forward on development quality**. Showcase developments during the term of the next Assembly will include:

- A taller development with a 150% green plot ratio, so that green walls, roof gardens and ground level plantings have to be bigger than the size of the block
- A 'Scope 3' zero-emissions development that produces no net greenhouse emissions during construction and operation, including the manufacturing of the construction materials\*\*
- A carparking-free residential development in an inner area such as the City to the Lake area, to reduce the traffic impacts of development and save buyers up to \$60,000 in construction costs.

Community organisations like scouts and guides, charities and religious groups form an important part of the life of our neighbourhoods. That's why the Greens will **release 5 low-cost (concessional) sites to community groups over 4 years, with at least 2 in Gungahlin and 2 in Molonglo**. Low-cost land for community organisations used to be included in new communities as a matter of course. In more recent decades, districts like Gungahlin and Molonglo have missed out.

\* Major sites would cover commercial development and residential development of over 50 dwellings.

\*\* For example materials made with renewable energy and natural building products can have low, zero or even negative emissions.

## STRONG ACTION ON BUILDING QUALITY

Home buyers rely on the regulatory system to make sure their new homes are free from serious defects.

Too many Canberrans have bought a home only to find that it has serious faults. The cost can be tens of thousands of dollars and years of stress. De-regulation has failed and needs to be reversed.

The Greens will bring back government building certifiers for multi-unit residential developments, and for all projects where the builder or major subcontractors have been the subject of regulatory action by Access Canberra or WorkSafe. This will be revenue neutral, funded by regulatory fees.

The Greens also support the introduction of property developer licensing.

## A GLOBAL REPUTATION FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT IS SUSTAINABLE AND CLIMATE CHANGE READY

While Canberrans are committed to climate action, our buildings are lagging behind, for example with brand new apartments that are too hot to live in during heatwaves. Reform has been waiting for national action, but this is stuck, and environment and industry groups are calling for change. It is time for the ACT to make a huge step forward.

Industry can deliver innovation if it has the time and certainty to skill up, test new methods and invest. That's why **the Greens will set a 10 year pathway to shift to world's best practice on climate-ready and environmentally-sustainable buildings**. Once at world's best practice, our new global reputation will bring business opportunities and jobs.

The pathway will include changes to both planning and building standards\*. It will include quick wins and longer-term ambitions, and will cover:

- Insulation and glazing, including getting the Energy Efficiency Rating system fixed for our future hotter climate and a pathway to higher minimum ratings for new buildings
- Passive design, such as shading, orientation of apartments, ventilation and reducing air leakage
- Solar orientation of blocks in new suburbs
- A pathway to all new buildings being gas-free
- Electric vehicle charge points in new buildings

To help industry deliver the pathway, the Greens will provide a **new Skills, Apprenticeships and Research-Industry Partnerships Fund to build the skills and innovation** needed to deliver the pathway.

\* Changes to building standards would be implemented through the ACT Appendix to the Building Code of Australia

## A PLANNING SYSTEM THAT INSISTS ON BETTER DEVELOPMENT

Some developers will always deliver the minimum standard they are allowed to get away with. That's why the Greens will deliver a planning system that insists on better development, and creates more-respectful engagement with communities.

### CLEAR DIRECTION ON PLANNING REFORM

The current Planning Review has been underway for two years, but is yet to deliver any major findings. The Greens believe that to succeed, it needs clear direction. The Greens will **set a clear direction for the planning review** that is focussed on:

- Substantially lifting the quality of development
- Creating more respectful engagement with communities (e.g. improving pre-application consultation and supporting better access to information)
- Ensuring development is climate change-ready and more environmentally sustainable
- Delivering more affordable housing for all Canberrans
- Better protecting trees, green space and heritage, including through more effective linkages with heritage and tree protection legislation

### MORE RESPECTFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The community often feels let down or shut out by planning processes - especially around development applications. This year, the Assembly's Standing Committee on planning delivered a report with 66 recommendations which represent a huge step forward on community engagement around development applications\*. The report has been backed by residents' groups and community councils. The Greens will implement the Inquiry's recommendations in full.

The Greens will also provide additional support for the community to have their say by **establishing an independent planning advisory service, open to community members who need help with responding to development applications and other planning processes**. This will help people impacted by development to overcome the complex, technical nature of the system and have their say. The service could be hosted by the Combined Community Councils or the Environmental Defenders Office.

\* The Inquiry into Engagement with Development Applications. Greens MLA Caroline Le Couteur chaired the Inquiry and was the driving force behind the recommendations.

## RESOLVING CONFLICT OVER INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Our industrial areas, and particularly Fyshwick, are facing new development pressures. For example, several waste industry proposals are located close to a proposal for housing on an industrial site, and to existing businesses who require a clean environment. However there is a limited supply of alternative sites suitable for large waste processing facilities. This situation is creating conflict between businesses, and between proponents and residents' groups.

We believe that the competing visions of our industrial areas need to be reconciled, in consultation with members of the community. The Greens will deliver **a review or Assembly Inquiry into planning for industrial zones** to resolve this issue, with the process used to be determined in consultation with stakeholders. This process should be concluded before any irreversible decisions are made. A moratorium should be placed on waste proposals and **residential development parts of the proposal for 1 Dairy Road Fyshwick until the review or Inquiry is complete** (other elements of DV377 could proceed in the interim, subject to community consultation).

## PROTECTING WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT CANBERRA... WHILE PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL CANBERRANS

Housing is at the centre of conflict over development in Canberra, because it makes up so much of our urban area, and housing development can have big impacts in our neighbourhoods and on our surrounding environmental and farming land. Whether we like it or not, Canberra's population is growing, and that means more housing is needed. As a city, we face difficult choices about where it is located and how it is designed. Like the rest of Australia, we also have a severe housing affordability problem, and a whole generation feels priced out.

## BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER ON HOUSING

The Greens believe that the best way to solve the conflict over housing development is to bring people together.

That's why we will **deliver a "community development compact" process on the planning rules for housing, that brings together residents' groups, people concerned about housing affordability, government and developers.** The compact process will be tasked with developing planning changes that can be made to encourage smaller, affordable homes without losing what we love about Canberra. It will also:

- Be delivered by district to allow planning changes to be tailored to local needs. **The first community development compact will be for the Inner North**, where conflict over development is high, housing demand is high and affordability is low. Future compacts could focus on districts with an ageing population that needs more options to downsize, such as Tuggeranong or Weston Creek.
- **Examine the rules on "DA Exempt" housing development in existing suburbs.** For example, the exemption could be limited to lower-impact homes and extensions, but with affordable homes such as granny flats made exempt, provided they are of a low-impact size and design.
- Examine the planning changes needed for innovations such as co-housing to be allowed in residential areas, while protecting trees and green space.
- Build on the 2018 Housing Choices program, which was a worthwhile deliberative democracy program, but has not been delivered on.
- Be guided by the community on scope, for example whether rules for supportive housing development on community facility land should be considered as part of the compact.

## PROTECTING OUR TREES AND GREEN SPACE

Loss of trees and green space is at the heart of conflict over housing development. The Greens have been pleased to see Labor and the Liberals come on board over trees and green space over the last year or so. However, there's no point planting a million baby trees if developers cut down hundreds of thousands of massive, mature trees. Tree planting needs to be backed by planning and regulatory changes to 'make room' for trees and green space.

That's why the Greens will continue to **refuse to back down on 30% canopy and permeability targets**. We will **change the Tree Protection Act and planning system jointly to make it harder for developers to cut down our mature canopy trees** during development. We will make room for green space and trees in development by **expanding the draft 'Living Infrastructure' planning changes** to cover:

- More space for street and park trees in new suburbs
- Tree canopy and green space in more types of residential development, like 'mixed use' buildings
- Local shops and town centres.

The Greens will also **prohibit wholesale landscape clearing in new suburbs such as Whitlam**. Developers currently strip off all the grass and topsoil, along with most of the trees, as part of the construction process. This trashes the local environment, sends dust plumes over surrounding homes, leaves new residents with a garden that has no soil for growing plants and grass and creates downstream sediment pollution.

## PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE

*Note: The Greens recognise the cultural significance of this land to traditional owners and support recognition of the conservation skills and heritage knowledge of the traditional owners of the ACT. This will be addressed in a specific First Nations announcement.*

Canberra has important heritage values, including our heritage as a world-recognised planned city, and architectural heritage. However, heritage has become a reactive regulatory system rather than an important community asset because community groups and the Heritage Council lack the resources for proactive work on promoting our heritage, protecting broader heritage values that the whole community can connect to and improving heritage protection processes.

Some of Canberra's most-loved features are views, such as those from Tuggeranong to the Brindabellas and along the axes laid out by Walter Burley Griffin in the Inner North. Many of these potentially have heritage significance or deserve planning protection, but are currently unprotected. The Greens will **identify and protect the key viewlines that Canberrans love**. Viewlines from the Griffin era and from the NCDC era will be covered. The project will be collaborative with NCA.



Canberra's planned-city legacy, such as Lake Burley Griffin, the design of inner areas and the view from Mount Ainslie are much loved by Canberrans. They are also an important part of Australia's national heritage, and a key attraction for visitors to Canberra. It is time to give them heritage protection. The ACT Greens will work cooperatively with the Federal Government on **co-ordinated national/ACT heritage protection of the central national area, lake and inner hills**, in a way that protects the character of Canberra's planned city landscape while allowing community needs such as housing and transport to be met.

Heritage is protected as a legacy for the community, and the community should be at the heart of our heritage protection. However community groups are limited in the role they can play by a lack of resources, facilities and coordination. The Greens will therefore **establish and fund a peak body to promote, represent and co-ordinate the community heritage sector**, bringing together people who care about our heritage. This would operate on a similar model to the Conservation Council, which is a peak body for the conservation sector. We will also investigate **options for a single "hub" site for the peak body and heritage groups** to hold meetings and store materials, to be located in an ACT Government facility.

The Greens will provide \$500,000 over 2 years **for the Heritage Council to upgrade the Heritage Register database and ACT Heritage website**, so that the Council can proactively promote Canberra's heritage and people interacting with the heritage protection system can work more efficiently.