

STATEMENT OF
Statement of
PLANNING INTENT
Planning Intent
FOR THE ACT
for the ACT



DECEMBER 2003

STATEMENT OF PLANNING INTENT

Planning and Land Act 2002

PREAMBLE

This Government came to office with the stated intention of ensuring that the planning and development of the ACT would be high on the policy agenda and provide for the needs of current and future communities. In this respect, the Government has recognised the significant contribution sound planning practice can make to delivering social equity (People), environmental management (Places) and economic growth (Prosperity).

The pre-election document (*Labor's Planning and Land Management Policy for Canberra*) 'Planning for People' articulated the Government's commitment to:

- ▶ Building a strategic planning approach;
- ▶ Developing more open and accountable planning;
- ▶ Protecting the qualities of the 'Garden City' and our open space network;
- ▶ Revitalising our neighbourhoods and local centres; and
- ▶ Restoring land development to the community.

The program for re-establishing planning as a central function of good governance has already been significant and included the development of an overarching strategic framework, a program of neighbourhood plans for local areas, master plans for commercial centres, policy guidelines, targeted Territory Plan variations and structure planning.

The most important reform, however, has been the drafting of the *Planning and Land Act 2002*, which amongst other things, resulted in the establishment of the ACT Planning and Land Authority and the ACT Planning and Land Council. This signifies both a political and administrative maturity in the planning and development of the Territory. It reasserts planning as a vital public function that must be conducted in an open, educative and accountable manner. It vests with an independent Authority the stewardship of planning for our social, economic, cultural and environmental well being, and setting a clear vision for our future. The Authority is supported in its role by the Planning and Land Council which is comprised of people with a range of skills and expertise to provide advice to the Authority and the Minister.

The ACT Planning and Land Authority is charged with making Canberra a more sustainable capital, and more importantly, an exemplary Australian city. To achieve this it must have capacity, legislatively and professionally, and it must act responsibly, demonstrating honesty, rigour and leadership in its activities.

PURPOSE

While the ACT Planning and Land Authority is responsible for overseeing the proper planning and development of the Territory, it must be guided by the wider policy setting and aspirations of the Government.

In this regard, the obligations of the Minister and the Authority are clearly expressed in the *Planning and Land Act 2002*. Section 14(1) of the Act states that the Minister may give the Authority a Statement of Planning Intent:

The Minister may give to the Authority a written statement that sets out the main principles that are to govern planning and land development in the ACT (the statement of planning intent).

Section 9 of the Act requires the Authority to perform its functions taking into consideration the Statement of Planning Intent.

It is my intention that this Statement outlines the key principles this Government wishes the Authority to have regard to in preparing its work program, and through the preparation of the planning and development strategies that will govern its decision-making.

The Statement is not an explicit direction to the ACT Planning and Land Authority, as the Authority's administration of the planning and development system is at arms length from the Government, however, it must have regard to these principles in the conduct of its functions.

The following represents what I believe are the main principles for governing the planning and development of the ACT for the immediate future. These are aimed at helping achieve sustainable development outcomes through improved governance; organisational leadership and capacity building; strategic planning and urban design; a pragmatic balance between community needs, economic development and environmental protection; and a celebration of Canberra.

GOVERNANCE AND LEGISLATIVE REFORM

No planning and development system is successful unless it is capable of providing relative certainty, appropriate levels of flexibility, consistency and timeliness. While very significant progress has been made in reforming the overarching governance arrangements, an unnecessary level of complexity, specificity, duplication and open-endedness hampers the administration and performance of the system.

The planning and development assessment system has long been a contentious issue for our community. The Government believes it should be reformed. A clearer and more time responsive system needs to be established for the making and administration of planning and development policy, including simplifying and clarifying not only the steps involved in the decision making processes, but also the system's expectations of proponents and members of the community who participate in it.

A part of any overarching reform agenda can be expected to include:

- ▶ The management of the leasehold estate as part of the Territory's planning and development regulation system, with an emphasis on compliance with lease conditions, a reduction of speculation in undeveloped land and simplification of the processes for granting and administering leases;
- ▶ Streamlining the Development Assessment system for all activities, including administrative processes that have developed around this system;
- ▶ Short-term changes to minimise planning system impediments in Civic, town centres and along transport corridors, including the pre-application phase incorporating High Quality Sustainable Design and Preliminary Assessments;
- ▶ Maintaining and promoting a single integrated development assessment path;
- ▶ Elevating the status and role of strategic planning and policy instruments in guiding decision making and engaging the community early in the planning process; and
- ▶ Providing appropriate safeguards for members of the community most directly affected by policy change and development applications.

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Canberra has a proud history of planning leadership. The establishment of the ACT Planning and Land Authority heralds a renaissance in planning, and it is critical that the Authority gains the confidence of the community in its administration of the planning and development system. As it matures, and guided by the advice from the Planning and Land Council, the Authority can be expected to provide the Territory community with professional and accountable planning administration; be decisive and proactive; and help Government to establish well-founded policy and follow through with its implementation.

In order to achieve this it will be necessary to:

- ▶ Develop the human resource capacity of the Authority to respond to the additional and diverse demands expected of it;
- ▶ Enhance the professional development of Authority staff and nurture cultural change to cope with the range of competing expectations;
- ▶ Increase the capabilities and access of staff to relevant information technology software and the Geographic Information System;
- ▶ Encourage decisiveness and creativity within the Authority, alongside expected levels of due diligence and risk management; and
- ▶ Improve the community's understanding and tolerance of the planning and development system in providing a forum for resolving issues of concern, but not necessarily to everyone's mutual satisfaction.

SPATIAL PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In conjunction with *People Places Prosperity: a policy for sustainability in the ACT* launched by the Government in early 2003, the Canberra Spatial Plan, as part of The Canberra Plan, sets out a framework for guiding a city structure and form that protects the sensitivity of the surrounding environment, including energy and water conservation; priorities for a socially inclusive community; and promotes appropriate economic investment opportunities. Spatial planning is more than just metropolitan planning for city growth - Canberra is more than just a footprint on the landscape; it is a complex system that is part of a region.

Whilst providing a long-term strategic planning framework for the development of Canberra and surrounding region, implementation of the Spatial Plan in the short-term will focus on:

- ▶ Further cultivating the critical partnerships both internal and external to Government that will be necessary in order to maintain the integrity of the strategic principles in the delivery of the strategy over time, including cross-border relationships;
- ▶ Ensuring strong linkages with the Economic White Paper and the Social Plan, within the overarching framework of The Canberra Plan, in order to achieve integrated outcomes;
- ▶ Facilitating the planning and delivery of integrated land use and transport strategies to achieve a sustainable urban structure/form and a multi-modal transport system (including walking and cycling) for the City;
- ▶ Maintaining the viability and character of a multi-centred City in conjunction with a metropolitan urban growth management strategy that curtails the detrimental impacts of urban sprawl;
- ▶ Detailed planning for the protection of the rural setting of Canberra, including responding to the recommendations of the Non-Urban Study as accepted by Government; and
- ▶ Changing planning policy and legislation to enable the rapid implementation of the key aspects of the Spatial Plan, particularly with regard to the centres of employment both current and future.

PROVIDING FOR THE COMMUNITY

A central role of any Government is to provide for the needs of the community, which includes providing for jobs, education, health, transport, housing, waste management and a vast array of other services. Increasingly the planning and development system has become a repository for a significant number of societal policy areas developed by governments in response to competing interests and expectations.

In order to effectively operate in this environment and provide for the needs of a changing community (particularly in respect to its demographic), it will be necessary to:

- ▶ Ensure that planning policies and the land release program respond to the objectives of social equity;
- ▶ Prepare needs assessment for different groups/activities in respect to the land release program and land availability;
- ▶ Ensure that affordable housing stock is provided, and that there is ample housing choice for the changing community profile;
- ▶ Promote energy efficiency, adaptable and accessible housing; whole of life-cycle costing for materials and wise water management;
- ▶ Ensure that land release and housing offer appropriate independent living opportunities for senior citizens and people with disabilities, and allows them to remain included in community life;
- ▶ Facilitate sensitive urban renewal that takes account of local character, whilst providing for a changing social dynamic; and
- ▶ Enhance recreational amenity, access to cultural activities and opportunities to access to open space.

CAPITALISING ON GOOD URBAN DESIGN

Good urban design enriches the experience of the City, creates a unique sense of place and has the capacity to add to the community's cultural and economic well being. The value and significance of committing to good urban design has been recognised by other State governments, the Planning Institute of Australia, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Property Council of Australia, who have developed urban design strategies and detailed design policies to enhance the public realm and the quality of urban architecture.

It is vital that the Government takes every opportunity presented, both in private and public sector development, to ensure that there is an appropriate investment in the quality of the urban fabric. This will require policies that clearly articulate the character and quality of the built and landscape form, as well as strategies that not only define key areas for improvement but also facilitate the implementation of such improvements.

The key principles are to ensure that:

- ▶ The community feels safe, has pride in and enjoys the experience of living and working in Canberra's urban environment;
- ▶ Attracting investment in Civic (reaffirm Civic as Canberra's pre-eminent business centre). This includes one of the directions in the City West Master Plan to connect the City centre and the lake;
- ▶ The fabric of the whole City achieves a sensitive balance between the characteristics of Canberra valued by its communities and the aspirations of all Australians for a national capital that symbolises the creative, multicultural, egalitarian and resilient qualities of Australia;
- ▶ Investment in the public realm is strategic, adds value to the overall development of the City and enhances the unique landscape qualities of Canberra;
- ▶ Encourage the incorporation of high quality public art into major developments and significant public spaces;
- ▶ Commercial and multi-storey residential development is of a high design quality and satisfies benchmark green building standards; and
- ▶ The urban structure and form for greenfield new suburban developments achieve higher levels of sustainability and responsiveness to the principles of neighbourhood design.

CELEBRATING CANBERRA

In the next decade there are several centenaries that will provide a focus for Canberra, singular among these is the Centenary of the naming of Canberra on March 12, 2013.

Through partnership with the Legislative Assembly, the Commonwealth Government and the Canberra community, this milestone represents a unique opportunity to celebrate in an enduring fashion, the establishment of the City as a National Capital and a major City in its own right, and promote its attributes on a national and international stage.

This is an opportunity to demonstrate innovation and leadership in planning and design, including, but not limited to:

- ▶ Delivery on key aspects of the Canberra Spatial Plan;
- ▶ Delivery on key aspects of the City West Master Plan and Central Area Strategic Implementation Program;
- ▶ Promotion of a physical expression of indigenous culture and national reconciliation;
- ▶ Establishment of national or international forums to explore architecture and city design;
- ▶ Delivery of a signature range of Canberra urban furniture and gateway public art program;
- ▶ The housing of the democratic instruments of the ACT government in a significant public building at a prominent site within Civic; and
- ▶ Partnership with the National Capital Authority and collaboration through the Griffin Legacy Project.

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Minister for Planning
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