

STATEMENT OF PLANNING INTENT 2010

Andrew Barr MLA
Minister for Planning

Canberra ACT





Andrew Barr MLA
Minister for Planning

FEBRUARY 2010



Introduction

In mid-2007 I released my first Statement of Planning Intent. The Statement established key planning priorities for the Government including serving Gungahlin, planning system reform, affordable housing and land release, and addressing climate change.

Among other things, the new directions resulted in:

- mandated water-use reductions of 40 per cent for new developments
- the creation of a more compact city through the development of the compact block code
- the Gungahlin Town Centre Planning Study.

By ensuring a high number of planning-ready blocks there has also been a significant increase in land supply with 3470 dwelling sites released in 2007-08 and 4339 new sites released in 2008-09.

These directions remain relevant and continue to form part of the Government's planning priorities. A changing environment however, means we need to update our priorities and ensure we respond to new challenges.

My second Statement of Planning Intent builds on my first, refining the planning policy directions laid out in 2007 and responding to new challenges.

In setting priorities for the future of planning in Canberra, the Government must ensure that Canberra maintains its unique status as the nation's capital while providing the living environment that Canberrans want and deserve.

The Government will ensure Canberra has a planning system which meets the challenge of climate change, supports economic growth and involves the community in decision-making.

Supporting Canberra's economic growth

In the short to medium term there is an ongoing need for the development assessment system and construction services administered by the ACT Planning and Land Authority to be responsive to the demands presented by the residual effects of the global economic crisis. In this respect the new development assessment system has already shown itself to be flexible and adaptable.

The Government's ACTPLAN initiative has delivered a range of procedural, cultural and structural improvements. ACTPLAN is an action plan supported by industry to ensure ACTPLA, the Department of Territory and Municipal Services and the building industry work more closely together to support thousands of building jobs in the ACT.

To ensure the planning system supports economic growth, the Government's intent is to:

- continue with the ACTPLAN initiative in support of further investment in the construction sector
- proactively engage in the COAG's micro-economic reform agenda contained within the initiatives of the Seamless National Economy
- review the policy content of key development codes, precinct codes and general codes within the Territory Plan
- enhance the inter-operability of related pieces of statute and process administered by other Government agencies.

Preparing for a sustainable future

Climate change changes everything. And the implications of climate change for planning in Canberra are enormous.

The debate about whether there is a problem is now over. The debate about how to create the solutions is now open. Climate change means Canberra changes. And our ideas for planning respond to this.

The ACT Government is planning for climate change.

The Government's intent is to:

- drive change to planning policy through the Sustainable future program in support of the Government's climate change strategy Weathering the Change. This will drive changes to regulation and design standards in the Territory Plan including those relating to solar orientation and solar access
- recalibrate the Canberra Spatial Plan to ensure that it is responsive to and can deliver on the key principles that are contained within it
- develop and implement statutory arrangements for protecting solar rights
- consult with industry to alter the current solar access rules in the Territory Plan to ensure better tools for measuring energy gain and strengthening the rules around passive solar orientation of stand alone blocks in new subdivisions
- work with the community and industry to implement, over the next ten years, carbon targets for entire estates
- implement more comprehensive measures to increase residential density in and around town and group centres, and along transport corridors
- develop world best practice sustainable development demonstration projects such as the East Lake development
- further enhance stormwater harvesting in new estates
- establish new approaches to water re-use in the Molonglo Valley development
- continue to drive energy efficiencies in new and existing homes by phasing out electric storage hot water heaters for class 1 and 2 buildings, consistent with the COAG National Strategy on Energy Efficiency.

Planning for a compact, affordable city

As Canberra's population grows and demand for new and affordable housing increases, the Government will continue to plan new suburbs in accordance with the Canberra Spatial Plan, whilst at the same time meeting the goal of the Canberra Spatial Plan to achieve 50 per cent of all new development by 2030 within 7.5km of the City centre.

Along with providing for new growth in appropriate areas, the government has continued to plan for residential intensification in existing areas of the city.

To ensure a compact, affordable city, the Government's intent is to:

- introduce new urban planning principles through the Sustainable future program. These principles will assist in the selection of and the design responses for sites appropriate for increased urban density
- promote a spatial pattern of development that supports alternative means of transport and that can reduce trip lengths to services and activities
- continue to release 'infill development' on land close to town and group centres, transport corridors and other social amenities
- deliver sustainable development in the Molonglo Valley
- continue to plan for East Lake as a showcase sustainable development
- continue to plan Gungahlin to allow for land release and community facilities
- continue to undertake work with the NSW Government to ensure sustainable growth in the capital region.

Planning for our neighbourhoods

Building on the work already undertaken in areas such as Woden, Belconnen, Gungahlin and Braddon, we will investigate ways of preparing our town centres and group centres for the future.

The Government's intent is to:

- complete the planning studies for Kingston and Dickson group centres and implement appropriate development opportunities, including examining whether there is enough access to supermarkets in Kingston and Dickson with a view to ensuring greater competition amongst retailers and greater choice for consumers
- better integrate the activities of other agencies in planning for town and group centres
- undertake a planning study for the Tuggeranong Town Centre
- develop a planning study for Erindale concurrently with the Tuggeranong town centre master plan
- prepare a program for developing planning studies for other group centres.

Listening to the community

Perhaps the most difficult element of any development assessment system is balancing the rights of the community with the rights of the individual.

The planning system impacts on these competing rights through the consultation process, the notification process and to a limited extent in the appeals process.

A key feature of the broader planning system is the focus of public consultation in the development of the Territory Plan and its related codes. This is designed to make the system fairer on everyone by engaging the community in setting the planning rules rather than debating policy through individual development proposals.

It is the intent of Government to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for the public to be effectively engaged in strategic planning projects and the development of planning policy, whilst limiting the potential for adopted planning policy to be subject to contest through the processing of individual development applications.

At the same time the Government will continue to promote and encourage those who propose to develop or use land where a development application is required, to consult with those who may be affected by their proposals and respond appropriately before lodging a development application.

Keeping politics out of planning

Good planning works to harmonise our communal, economic and environmental needs. Bringing these needs together can be a difficult balancing act. But balance is at the heart of the Government's approach to planning.

Balance also applies to our approach to development.

To ensure development assessment is undertaken without political or commercial interference, the Government will continue to keep the politics out of planning. It will remain a statutory function handled at arm's length from government, providing the community and industry with confidence in the separation of power between policy making and decision makers.

The Government's planning intent to:

- maintain the statutory independence of development assessment
- prioritise the timely processing of development assessment
- ensure transparency of information about development assessment.

Conclusion

The ACT Government has undertaken an unprecedented reform of the ACT's planning system and we now have the nation's best practice model in place.

The new system is working well, supported by comparative assessment with performance in previous years and that of other jurisdictions. We are currently bedding down a range of refinements and we are pressing on with the review of the policy underpinning the structure of the new planning system.

Progress and reform are not one-off changes. They are ongoing processes that must be pursued diligently. In the short to medium term therefore, the focus for planning in the ACT will involve significant policy reform.

The reforms will be focused on the complex task of planning for climate change and supporting economic growth whilst keeping the politics out of planning. This will be achieved by delivering the reform of planning policy in close consultation with the community and industry.

We must do this in ways that balance Canberra's economic, social and environmental needs and in ways that create opportunities for all Canberrans to grow and flourish

