

2021

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

PLANNING FOR THE GUNGAHLIN TOWN CENTRE

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

**Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Planning and Land Management**

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Planning for the Gungahlin Town Centre Ministerial Statement. This statement reinforces the Assembly's interest in the Gungahlin Town Centre, the Assembly's agreed resolution on the town centre from February this year, and outlines the current planning and activities being undertaken in the town centre.

As I stated in February this year, the town centre is also continuing to grow and evolve. Envisaged as a lower scale urban village when development commenced in the 1990s, the centre has grown rapidly, attracting new residents, businesses and investment. It has also been transformed through the commencement of light rail.

We want Gungahlin, like other parts of Canberra, to represent best practice planning and design, and to provide for the future with the ability to adapt to changes in the market, technology, design, and the community.

Planning for Gungahlin and Canberra is an ongoing process; and we continually look at lessons and innovations from within Canberra and other cities to apply to get positive development outcomes in our city.

Planning, land release and development is a long process. Developments that are approved today may take a number of years to be constructed. Planning has many challenges along its way that need to be worked through incrementally and systematically. This needs to be worked through by our planners and with other areas in Government and with the community.

Planning controls themselves take a number of years to change and are subject to robust statutory processes and community engagement. We need to keep checking whether our planning system is delivering good results.

With approximately one third of the town centre still to be developed, we take opportunities to review planning frameworks to facilitate appropriate development for the centre, while reflecting and balancing the expectations of the community.

This is why in 2017, we started the Gungahlin Town Centre planning refresh that led to the public release of the snapshot document in 2018 and the draft variation to the Territory Plan No. 364 in 2019. Nine submissions on the draft variation were received.

On 31 March 2021, DV364 was formally referred to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services for consideration. The Committee on 8 April 2021 agreed to conduct an inquiry into DV364 and is currently inviting submissions. This is a great opportunity for the community to tell us what they want to see in the Gungahlin Town Centre, and I look forward to receiving the Committee's report in due course and to the Government formally responding.

On 10 February 2021, this Assembly, with my support, passed a resolution calling for additional employment and better mixed-use developments in the Gungahlin town centre. While the resolution does not require a formal report back to the Assembly, the Government intends to respond to the resolution.

The directorate has already commenced considering the resolution in their work, including in relation to the ACT Planning System Review and Reform project.

I look forward to providing the Assembly with a response to the resolution before the last sitting day of this year.

A key objective of the ACT Planning System Review and Reform project, reiterated in the 10th Legislative Assembly Parliamentary and Governing Agreement, is to improve built form and public spaces across the Territory. The Agreement also identifies the need to incorporate character, context, and design as key elements of the system to substantially lift the quality of the design of new developments.

As part of the Planning System Review and Reform project, we have already examined some international and national planning systems for best practice examples.

Further, the National Capital Design Review Panel established by the ACT Government in partnership with the National Capital Authority is driving improved design for major development and redevelopment projects across Canberra. The Design Review Panel will also play an important role in the ongoing development of the Gungahlin Town Centre, and it will provide advice on best practice mixed use development for four sites currently for sale.

The Gungahlin Town Centre still has land zoned for commercial uses. The ACT Government has long called for a major Federal Government agency to join Defence Housing and our ACT public sector employees in Gungahlin Town Centre. In particular, I'd like to call on the Federal Government to locate their new National Resilience, Relief and Recovery Agency in the Gungahlin Town Centre.

This is a new agency announced just last week and would be a wonderful opportunity for Commonwealth Public Servants to catch the light rail to Gungahlin to work. It's a national agency that should be based in the nation's capital.

Canberra was planned as a city with a range of different centres that have different roles. Part of Canberra's design is that not every centre is a complete city in its own right; there are other parts of Canberra where we will go to find the specific services we need.

This is not unique to Canberra.

The Territory Plan is a planning document and does not mandate specific businesses or favour one business type over another – it provides for uses within centres.

I would also like to remind members that while recent focus has been on the town centre, Gungahlin is more than just its town centre. The Gungahlin district's population is estimated to reach approximately 82,500 this year, an increase of more than 6,000 residents from 2017. In a previous life I was a real estate agent helping people find their first home or their new home in the broader Gungahlin area and it's been wonderful to see more and more Canberrans choose to call this part of our city home. Several suburbs are still under construction and there is one further suburb, Kenny, to be developed in the coming years. That's 15 residential suburbs, excluding Mitchell, since first houses were completed in Palmerston in 1992.

Further, Government land development in the Gungahlin region over the past decade has been recognised by local and national industry bodies. The developments of Franklin, Throsby, Forde, Harrison, Crace and Bonner have been recognised for their outstanding delivery of master planned suburbs, residential development, urban design, and affordable housing.

I know that there is wide interest in the proposed new community centre within the town centre. The project is identified as a commitment

in the Parliamentary and Governing Agreement for the 10th Legislative Assembly. This also follows an Assembly motion agreed in February 2019. The community centre's project brief will be further informed by a Gungahlin district Community and Recreational Facilities Assessment that is currently being prepared by an independent consultant. Engagement with key community stakeholders began in February 2021 and will continue with further community consultation in the second half of 2021. This will be considered by the government in the future when it has the evidence and information to support a budget business case.

Madam Speaker, as you can see, Gungahlin and its Town Centre is providing homes for thousands of Canberrans and will for many more in the future.

The town centre is well connected to public transport and offers a wide range of shops, amenities, and recreation opportunities. There are many local businesses thriving there, which is a great endorsement of the centre's planning.

The government is continuing to monitor the growth and planning for Gungahlin to create the best centre and district possible. I thank members for their continuing interest in the Gungahlin Town Centre.