



**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

21/59644

Mr Peter Elford  
President  
Gungahlin Community Council  
[president@gcc.asn.au](mailto:president@gcc.asn.au)

Dear Mr Elford *Peter*

Thank you for your email of 7 July 2021 on behalf of the Gungahlin Community Council (GCC) regarding concerns for the viability of the Gungahlin town centre and the outcome of the development application (DA 201732666) relating to 'the Establishment'.

As you are aware, the independent nature of the planning and land authority (the authority) means that politicians, including Ministers, are unable to interfere in decisions of the authority.

I have been in strong agreement with you for a long time about the need for more commercial development in Gungahlin Town Centre. I have written to you in the past about the ACT Government's actions in providing office workers to Gungahlin Town Centre and also our shared disappointment that there is no appetite from the Federal Liberal Government to locate a large Government Department in the Gungahlin Town Centre.

From a planning perspective, the ACT Government has done all that it can to enable commercial development in the Gungahlin Town Centre. The ACT Government also wants to see more commercial activity and it's clear that continuing to do what we have always done is unlikely to get this outcome. The Property Council of Australia reinforced this in their contribution to the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services hearings into Draft Variation 364. Planning levers can only go so far, and without the interest from a significant Federal Government Department, it will be difficult to drive commercial activity in the Gungahlin Town Centre.

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The changes proposed in Draft Variation 364 attempt to drive commercial activity through demand provided by residents in the Gungahlin Town Centre. The ACT Government's thinking is that the Gungahlin Town Centre can be a genuine mixed-use area, which has a thriving commercial life throughout the daytime, into the evening, and also on weekends. I appreciate that Gungahlin Community Council does not agree with this approach; however, simply keeping the land reserved for commercial activity has not successfully led to large-scale commercial investment in the Gungahlin Town Centre to date and the ACT Government is actively working to find solutions. The ACT Government is not able to force people to open a business or dictate locations to people wanting to open a business.

The ACT Government needs to find 100,000 homes for Canberrans over the next 25 years as our population continues to grow. Canberrans are also ageing, and living in smaller households, so I am mindful that these homes must be suitable for older people and close to shops, services, community facilities, and public transport. This is not confined to Gungahlin – all town centres are seeing greater residential development as we build a city that is compact and efficient. Building 'up' rather than 'out' protects our bush landscape including Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve. I know that Gungahlin residents enjoy having such great access to nature reserves, and I'm proud that we have been able to continue to expand our parks and reserves in Gungahlin.

The ACT Government already has substantial work underway to make thoughtful planning decisions in Gungahlin in addition to the Planning System Review and Reform Project. The Community and Recreational Facilities Analysis, which was commenced due to strong advocacy from the Gungahlin Community Council, will provide valuable information about what community facilities are wanted and needed by the Gungahlin community. The investigation into mixed-use zoning will assist Gungahlin Town Centre to be a place where people will want to not just live and work, but also visit for community, shopping, and recreation. I am aware that you are after immediate action in the Gungahlin Town Centre but I am of the view that a considered approach will deliver the best outcomes for Gungahlin and the broader ACT community.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on making Gungahlin Town Centre a thriving hub of commercial and community activity.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

  
Mick Gentleman MLA  
12/9/2021