

GUNGALIN SMOKE SIGNALS



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Failed Town Centre Refresh
The Australian Energy Market
Floating Wetlands for Gungahlin
Plans for Gold Creek Homestead Precinct
ACT Container Deposit Scheme



UPCOMING MEETINGS:

GCC public meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm. Meetings are held regardless of any pandemic restrictions - when permitted, we meet at the Gungahlin Eastlake Club otherwise we meet online using Zoom. In either case, we stream and save video of our meetings on the GCC Facebook page (facebook.com/gungahlin) Further details, agendas, and how to register for online meetings can be found at gcc.asn.au/meetings

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Message from the Editor:

Gungahlin is a great place to live because it has great communities and Gungahlin Smoke Signals gives a snapshot of how communities impact Gungahlin. Send your community stories to gunsmoke@gcc.asn.au.

KEVIN COX



Gungahlin Community Council

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Gungahlin Community Council meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, at 6:30pm at EastLake Gungahlin, 51 Hinder Street. When possible, meetings are streamed live via Facebook.

We are grateful for the financial support provided by the ACT Government.

From the President

PETER ELFORD



At the GCC's AGM in December 2021 a new executive was appointed - see the inside cover for details. Thanks to all who volunteer for the GCC executive, particularly outgoing members Sharee Shultz and Krishna Nadimpaplli, and to those in the Gungahlin community who engage with the GCC and provide feedback at meetings, through social media, the phone, our website, and email!

For most of 2021, the GCC campaigned to ensure the Gungahlin Town Centre meets the residential, commercial, retail, community, and entertainment expectations of Gungahlin residents (details elsewhere in this issue).

Shortly after it started in early May 2021 the Suburban Land Agency (SLA) quickly committed "... to work with the GCC on the place making of future land releases in the [Gungahlin Town Centre].

Over 6 months later, in November 2021, The Minister for Planning, Mick Gentleman, released the ACT Government's response to the petition and the two motions that were crucial formal elements of the campaign.

The responses to the petition and motions add very little to the SLA's initial commitment. Of the 18 "asks" in the two motions, seven are AGREED, two are NOTED, and nine are AGREED-IN-PRINCIPLE. Clearly Agreed-in-Principle means no further action will be taken, as the response references the flawed consultations undertaken by EPSDD in recent years, promises change as part of the Reform of The ACT Planning System (unlikely to be in place until 2023-24 ...), and restates policies and processes that have demonstrably failed. The only "actions" the GCC identified (in addition to the SLA's commitment) are:

- a prospectus on the benefits of Gungahlin will be prepared for the Federal Finance minister but it's hard to see how this will achieve an outcome given requests of this type have been made for over twenty years), and
- "traffic flows will continue to be monitored, and any necessary improvements will be considered by Government" (hardly very convincing).

Similarly, the response to the petition does not acknowledge the validity of the community's concerns and includes no further actions other than the prospectus noted above. Overall, the responses to both the petition and the motions are dismissive.

Focus now turns to the government's (overdue) response to the inquiry into DV364. The GCC has asked for the issues identified to be acknowledged and specific, timely actions to address the specific and unique issues in Gungahlin – it may well be that a failure to do so will result in the current campaign extending into a second year.

The GCC was thrilled to support the Rotary Club of Gungahlin's initiative to establish a rotunda in the Yerrabi Pond park, which was opened with much fanfare on 11 December 2021. Built with funding support from the Federal government (the Community Grant fund), Rotary and the GCC, and with the support of ACT City Services this will be a welcome addition to the Yerrabi area.

The GCC has continued to advocate for upgrades of the police station in Gungahlin and an increased police presence in Gungahlin. The government has committed to relocating some emergency services out of the Gungahlin Joint Emergency Services Centre to a new facility in Mitchell (SES and RFS) to make space for ACT policing during 2022 and to conduct further master planning. The GCC has called for planning to be accelerated and more police to be stationed in Gungahlin.

Finally, the GCC wrote to Transport Minister Chris Steele in October 2021 seeking more information on accidents and traffic hot spots in Gungahlin and a regular opportunity to meet with Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS). We hope to have a response to this correspondence shortly.

Failed Town Centre Refresh

PETER ELFORD

Introduction

It's been an interesting year for Gungahlin:

- On 10 February 2021 the ACT Assembly passed a motion moved by Suzanne Orr MLA "calling on the Government to support the further development of the Gungahlin region and town centre and outline how this might be achieved"[1].
- On 27 April 2021 the Gungahlin Community Council (GCC) called for the sale of land in the Gungahlin Town Centre be halted to prevent the land being wasted on "mixed use" developments that were almost entirely residential and contributed little if anything to the commercial, retail, community, entertainment, or employment capacity of the town centre.
- On 2 June 2021 the ACT Assembly passed a motion moved by Andrew Braddock MLA (on 11 May) calling for the Government to "direct the Suburban Land Agency to develop land in the Gungahlin Town Centre in a way that generates high quality outcomes for the community"[2].
- On 3 August 2021 a petition with 714 signatures sponsored by Andrew Braddock MLA was lodged with the ACT Assembly calling for the ACT Government "to immediately suspend ... the sale/auction of any ... sites in the Gungahlin Town Centre"[3].
- On 1 October the ACT Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services published their report on the Committee's Inquiry into Draft Variation (DV) 364 which proposed significant changes to the Gungahlin Town Centre Precinct Code. The committee wrote in their report that "the committee is of the opinion that the Draft Variation is not fully formed and that the technical documents don't serve to realise the objectives of the town centre plans. The committee also questions how the DV will shape the town centre and interact with the indicative land releases to lead to the stated outcomes"[4].

Clearly the expectations of Gungahlin residents are not being met. This article outlines why, highlighting the failings of the ACT Planning System and the apparent absence of any processes within the ACT Government to ensure that Gungahlin is completed with all the services and facilities of a typical Canberra district.

Community Expectations

Canberra is famously laid out as a collection of "satellite towns". A primary goal of this distributed-district design was to minimise commuting for work and to provide most of the education, health, community, sporting, recreation, retail, and entertainment services and facilities for the district's residents within the district. These services and facilities are concentrated in a district's town centre.

The district of Gungahlin was established in the north of Canberra in the early 1990s. Residents moving to Gungahlin have expected that the Gungahlin Town Centre would develop like the other Canberra town centres, centred around an employment base provided by a large (Federal) government agency office. For a greenfield district like Gungahlin, that is home to thousands of young families, having a major centre for employment within the local town centre has significant social and health implications. If workers don't have long commutes, they have more quality time to spend with families and to build, belong and contribute to neighbourhood communities.

The early land use planning for the town centre was consistent with this expectation with substantial space identified for commercial office zoned appropriately in the ACT Territory Plan. As recently as 2010, the Gungahlin Town Centre Planning Report 2010 reflected this thinking "by reserving enough land for up to 200,000m² of office space sufficient to accommodate 10,000 office jobs"[5].

Although reserving space for commercial offices within the town centre was necessary to enable such an outcome, history has shown that it was far from sufficient to ensure the

Gungahlin town centre developed with the appropriate combination of facilities and services noted above, particularly employment. A few significant events and (in)actions have stunted the development of the town centre:

- Prior to ACT self-government, the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) restricted the total amount of office space that could be developed in central Canberra, facilitating the construction of large commercial offices to support Federal government agencies in the town centres of Belconnen, Tuggeranong, and Woden. With the introduction of self-government, the NCDC was abolished, and no regulatory mechanism was put in place to guide/enforce where commercial space was developed and government agencies (the major employer in the ACT) were free to build offices wherever they please. The Gungahlin Town Centre is the first town centre that has been developed under self-government.
- The sale of the Canberra Airport by the Federal government led to the development of a substantial employment hub in Canberra outside the town centres, significantly increasing options for employers and reducing demand for office space with the town centres.

These events have not been sufficiently mitigated by the ACT Government to foster the development of the Gungahlin Town Centre, and further:

- The enforcement of the ACT Territory Plan, of which the Gungahlin Town Centre Precinct Code is part, has been weak, with significant variations from the ACT Territory Plan permitted at the per-site Development Application level, and erosion of the overall town centre plan through a series of territory plan variations and proposed variations.

Gungahlin Town Centre Refresh

This "weak enforcement" led to the appearance of several high-rise residential developments in the Gungahlin Town Centre from 2015 onwards[6] in the "precinct" of the Town Centre intended to be an Office Park. This led to widespread confusion, frustration, and concern within the Gungahlin community as this represented the loss of land that could support a future employment base, consistent with the Territory Plan and other Canberra town centres.

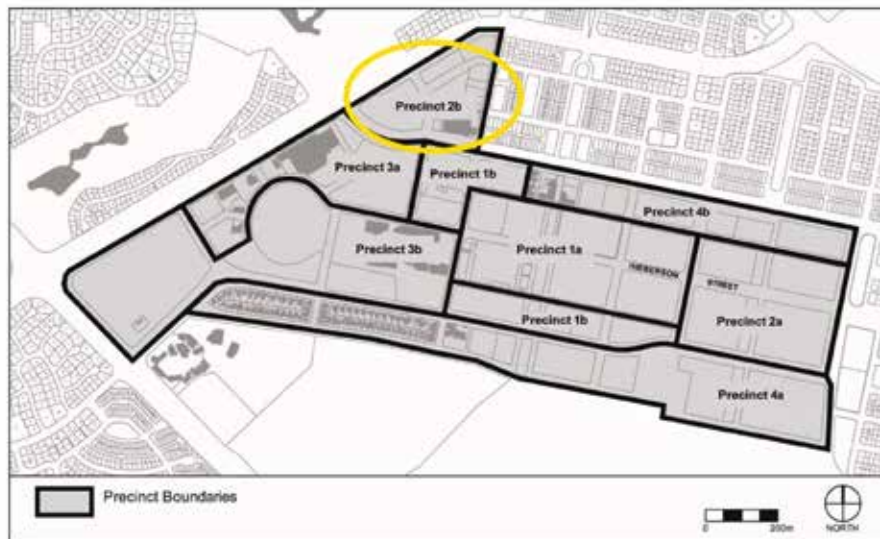
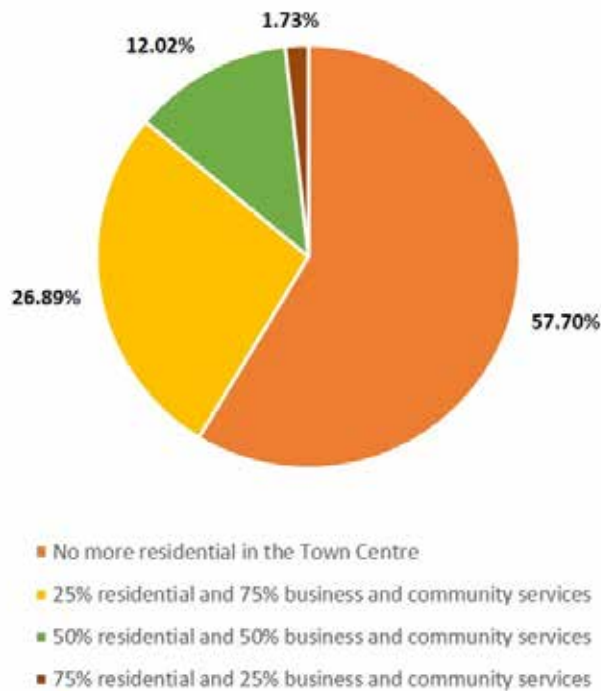


Figure 12 Precinct areas within the Gungahlin Town Centre

Gungahlin Town Centre Precincts (pre-DV364, August 2015). Precinct 2b (Office Park) is now almost entirely built out as high-rise residential mixed use. Precincts: 1a – Retail Core, 1b – Retail Core Mixed Use, 2a – Office Core, 2b – Office Park, 3a – Services and Trades, 3b – Major Community and Recreation Facilities, 4a – Southern Transition, 4b – Northern Transition

Residents have consistently indicated a strong desire for employment and services with the town centre rejecting increased residential development. The Gungahlin Community Survey in 2019 showed 85% of the 1,481 respondents wanted no more than 25% of the town centre space used for residential. This is hardly surprising given the very poor takeup of commercial/retail leases in the so-called mixed-use developments.

Q5. How much of the remaining Open Space in the Town Centre should be Residential?



Gungahlin Community Survey 2019 – Q5 (1,481 responses) How much of the remaining Open Space in the Town Centre should be Residential? (vs. Business and Community Use)

Consequently, in November 2016 the Gungahlin Community Council (GCC) approached the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD):

“... regarding the transformation of the Office Park precinct into a very high density collection of mixed-use residential towers. It highlights the lack of cohesion there appears to be in how these developments are approved, particularly in the context of the overall town centre plan, and the community’s understanding of what is permitted.[7]”

EPSDD agreed to undertake “a place-making review of the Gungahlin precinct plan”[8] to examine:

- Building height and character
- Upgrading and enhancing public spaces
- Walking, cycling and road transport

The consultation undertaken by The Gungahlin Town Centre Planning Refresh (the Refresh) throughout 2017 included many different forms of engagement including a substantive evening workshop. The resultant Community Engagement Report published in May 2018[9] reflected much of this feedback fairly but also included the following comment in the key messages summary:

“mixed views about the potential for increasing building heights in the town centre. Concerns about increases in building height related to traffic congestion, bulk and scale, overshadowing, privacy and the interface with existing development. Support for increases in building height noted the changing character of the town centre, the need for marker buildings and the strong demand for residential development,”

All other references in the Community Engagement Report indicated strong opposition for increased residential development in the town centre consistent with the views expressed by most participants in the workshop, and residents through multiple channels. The portion of the observation underlined above therefore seemed out of place and appeared to reflect a minority position expressed by a property developer (or developers).

There was no further progress on the Refresh until the release of a document called the Gungahlin Town Centre Planning Refresh – Snapshot in November 2018[10]. The GCC and the Gungahlin community were shocked to discover that the Snapshot recommended significant changes to the Gungahlin Precinct Code (Territory Plan) that had not been tabled and discussed during the Refresh. This included substantial changes to the amount of land zoned for commercial development (down to 65,000m²), significant increases in the amount of land zoned for mixed-use development and an alternative approach for providing for community facilities.

The publication of the Snapshot signalled the end of the Refresh project prompting the GCC to write to EPSDD to express our concerns[11]:

“... the Refresh moves Gungahlin away from the ACT stated goal of sustainability. Sustainability requires localisation of economic activity. The GCC Town Refresh continues the trend of centralisation of economic activity to Civic and the Northbourne Avenue corridor. It does this by halving the amount of space available for employment in the GCC Town Centre.

This is unacceptable as it is planned that only 14% of paid employment for Gungahlin residents is within the Gungahlin district and that includes home-based businesses and the industrial area of Mitchell.”

The Refresh experience further undermined the already low level of trust that Gungahlin residents have with the planning system and processes. The Refresh took too long, the feedback from the community was selectively picked at, feedback was ignored, and the final conclusions and proposed actions were at odds with what the community had expressed. Moreover, the introduction of new proposals (reducing the amount commercial space, increases in mixed-use developments, new mechanisms for handling community space, etc.) which were not exposed to the community for discussion, came as a complete shock.

Draft Variation 364

Almost a year after the Snapshot document was released, Draft Variation 364 to the ACT Territory Planning September 2019 was published for comment. DV364 is a revision to the Gungahlin Town Centre Precinct based on the Refresh Snapshot. The GCC's submission highlighted the core issues yet again[12]:

- Reduction of the Total Space Reserved for Commercial Development
The GCC strongly recommends that the existing reservation of 100,000m² for commercial space be retained and the ACT government explore mechanisms to develop/attract more commercial interest in Gungahlin
- Repurposing of precinct 2a from “Office Core” to “Mixed Use East”
The GCC recommends that the further residential (mixed-use) development be minimised (not maximised) as part of DV364 in precinct 2a.

The Variation had interim effect for 12 months which lapsed in August 2020, meaning that the previous Gungahlin Town Centre Precinct Code (dated 2015) became effective. This was followed by a period of silence until March 2021 when an update to the Draft Variation was suddenly published in response to the consultation (again, with interim effect, but only for a portion of the Town Centre).

None of the GCC's recommendations were actioned in the update.

As a result of the strong advocacy from the GCC (eg. the Call to Suspend Land Sales mentioned at the beginning of this article), and from Yerrabi MLAs (eg. Suzanne Orr's motion in the ACT Assembly), the Minister for Planning referred DV364 to the Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning Transport and City Service (PTCS).

It was becoming increasingly obvious to the GCC that relying on just the ACT Planning System to deliver the outcomes expected by Gungahlin residents was hopeless. Not only is the Planning System acknowledged by the Chief Planner[13] and Minister for Planning[14] to be failing, other economic development incentives, investments or other mechanisms need to be put in place to attract employment (or employment alternatives) to the town centre.

The response from the CEO of the Suburban Land Agency (John Dietz)[15], with the support of the Minister for Urban Development (Yvette Berry), was therefore welcomed as it not only acknowledged the issues raised by the GCC and the Gungahlin community, but also offered:

“... to work with the GCC on the place making of future land releases in the GTC [Gungahlin Town Centre]. This would include engagement on how the sale of these blocks are brought to the market, the provision of open space and interface with the linear park and future public realm.”

Inquiry into Draft Variation 364

The Inquiry into Draft Variation 364 was very broad and examined not only the sequence of events and specifics of the Variation itself, but also the overall development of the Gungahlin Town Centre.

The GCC submission to the Inquiry[16] and appearance before the PTCS Committee addressed much of what is included in this article, as well as several specific observations on the Variation itself. The Inquiry also provided an opportunity for industry representatives to share their perspective on the Planning System and how that system contributed to the development outcomes in Gungahlin, particularly in relation to mixed-use developments. The GCC members found the industry feedback more in line with their own advocacy experiences compared to the feedback and responses provided by EPSDD and the Planning Minister.

When the Inquiry report was published on 1 October, 2021[17], it was welcomed by the GCC. Most importantly, the report acknowledges the GCC’s concerns outlined in this article. Moreover, the report’s recommendations are broadly consistent with the actions proposed in our petition, our requests to the Minister for Planning, and the motions moved by Suzanne Orr and Andrew Braddock passed by the ACT Assembly.

The GCC particularly noted the following comments of the Committee (our emphasis) from the report:

*... The committee is of the opinion that **the Draft Variation is not fully formed** and that the **technical documents don’t serve to realise the objectives of the town centre plans**. The committee also **questions how the DV will shape the town centre** and interact with the indicative land releases to lead to the stated outcomes.*

*... The Committee is **concerned by the methodology used to determine the demand for commercial land** within the town centre and the subsequent decrease in land reserved for commercial use. Most concerning is that a commercial needs assessment was not undertaken to inform the decision that demand had in fact decreased. ...*

*... **It was clear from all evidence before the Committee that mixed use development and the planning settings are very broad and not necessarily achieving the outcomes the Government, community or developers are wanting**. The testimony highlighted the obstacles to achieving a mixed use precinct when developers only have responsibility for one single block and how a precinct scale development has more potential to achieve the outcomes sought.*

The GCC strongly recommends the ACT Government adopt all 8 of the Inquiry report’s recommendations, paying careful attention to the following two:

RECOMMENDATION 1

To inform the Territory Plan planning regulations, a thorough investigation be completed by the ACT Government that:

- identifies retail, community and commercial activity that can prosper in the town centre including activities that can anchor further growth;*
- identifies options for the ACT Government to support potential commercial activity through appropriate land provision and complementary policy settings; and*
- the findings of the investigation be used to inform the sale and development requirements of future land releases in the town centre.*

RECOMMENDATION 3

In order to realise the objectives of the planning provisions, the ACT Government amend the indicative land release program so that the unsold blocks in Gungahlin East precinct:

- be sold as a precinct rather than as individual blocks;
- have contractual and lease requirements applied to the sale to deliver a precinct that includes retail, business, and community facility developments;
- apply a maximum number of residential dwellings allowable so that residential dwellings are not the primary or majority use;
- apply a minimum square metre requirement for commercial development; and
- be designed in consultation with the community.

Next Steps

It's widely acknowledged that the residents of Gungahlin have got the Government's attention! The Indicative Land Release Program (ILRP) 2021-22 – 2025-26[18] released with the ACT budget on 6 October 2021 states:

"It is noted that Gungahlin town centre is currently subject to a planning review through Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 364 (Gungahlin town centre), an inquiry by the ACT Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services and two resolutions of the ACT Legislative Assembly. The outcomes of these, will be considered further and responded to in the next ILRP."

(as well as the petition calling for land sales in the Town Centre to be suspended).

It may be that the Minister for Planning has given up on Gungahlin[19], but the ACT Government needs to formally acknowledge there are serious issues with the development of the Gungahlin Town Centre and take immediate and specific action to address the shortfall in employment, retail, community, and entertainment services.

The GCC is aware of the ACT Planning Systems Reform Project[20] but has serious concerns about its relevance given that its implementation will take many months (years?), notwithstanding that the details of the new Planning System are yet to be revealed to the community. There is a time imperative in Gungahlin with the few remaining blocks of land zoned for "mixed-use" continuing to be brought to market.

The Planning System needs to be supported by substantive and concrete incentives, investments, or other mechanisms to attract employment (or employment alternatives) to the town centre, and to ensure the development of the remaining sites contributes substantially to the viability of the Town Centre. The community, industry and government must be brought together to do better than we are doing now.

Progressing Draft Variation 364 in its current form and continued dismissal of these issues will confirm the ACT Government is committed to nothing but further residential development and the completion of Gungahlin as a dormitory district.

The Inner South Canberra District Planning Strategy

Future Directions for our District: how it came about

DAVID DENHAM

The start

You can never have the perfect planning system to please everyone, but you can always improve what you have now. So when the ACT Government declared it was going to have District Plans, Richard Johnston saw an opportunity to take the lead and produce our own **Inner South Canberra District Planning Strategy** (<https://www.isccc.org.au/isccc/wp-content/uploads/Inner-South-Canberra-District-Planning-Strategy-ISCCC-2021.pdf>), based on what the community valued.



The process

The advantage we had was that we had our survey results carried out in 2019/20, and completed by over 550 people. This survey identified the main characteristics residents valued. We later supplemented this with the results from the ACT Government's consultation workshop in the Inner South and input from each of our eight associations in the ISCCC. Our total membership is over one thousand.

The disadvantage was that this was the first cab off the rank, and I think Richard would acknowledge that it was harder than he had expected. Not even the ACT government had developed a District Plan. We had to start from scratch.

We talked to the Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council planning officers and looked at the Sydney District Plans. In the end, we decided to use the format of the 2018 ACT Planning Strategy because it is still extant. This includes the five Themes: Compact and efficient city; Diverse Canberra; Sustainable and resilient territory; Liveable Canberra and Accessible Canberra. We added a sixth Theme, Heritage. This includes Aboriginal and European Heritage.

It was hard work. Most of the ISCCC's associations wanted to include something from their area, and each word and phrase had to be agreed upon by our Council.

In September, we held a public meeting via zoom (90 registrations), presenting the draft plan for comment. We developed the final document after consideration of those comments.

Barbara Moore did the bulk of the work in preparing the document for typesetting, selecting the pictures and finalising the text. We started with just a few pictures, but thought that if the government can use nice pictures in their publications, why can't we? We also thought our plan might be taken more seriously if it was professionally presented.





Photo by Anne Forrest

The Vision

Our plan will enable our District to accommodate an additional 12,000 people by 2040 if required. This urban infill can be achieved without losing the desired characteristics of low-density residential areas, by carrying out well-planned 'targeted' redevelopment in appropriate locations, rather than piecemeal, incremental change in cherished, established areas.

It will contribute to the social, environmental and economic aspirations of residents in the Inner South, but throughout the city and nationally to make Canberra the sustainable and resilient city we are privileged to inhabit.

The ACT Government has not yet revised its 2018 vision for Canberra. It appears focused, at present, on the processes to be incorporated in the new Territory Plan.

It is committed "to deliver a planning system that is clear, easy to use and that facilitates the realisation of long-term aspirations for the growth and development of Canberra while maintaining its valued character." In other words, continuing the developer-driven planning system with more, haphazard densification, without recognising the aspirational goals.

It is important that the Planning Authority has a high degree of credibility in the community. Therefore, confidence and trust in the planning system should be seen as a major, if not the most important outcome of the review and reform process.

The Next Steps

We will have to talk to the ACT Government about how it wants to proceed because it will have to produce eight different District Plans. Hopefully, it will appreciate our efforts and be more interested in locally-based planning solutions in future.

We need commitment from the government to listen and work with us. This process could be difficult, because at present, with Covid, it's hard to set up in-depth meetings, when all you can see are the people's heads.

But that's the challenge for 2022.



Capital Brewing on Dairy Road



Affordable Tenancies for Gungahlin

The Founders of Canberra wanted to stop land speculators from profiting from the development of the National Capital. They also wanted to make Canberra economically self-sufficient and not impose a development burden on the rest of Australia. Many were followers of Henry George, who in *Progress and Poverty* (1879) — <https://progressandpoverty.org/> — described the idea that wealth generated by people living and working together remained within the local community and was used to develop infrastructure. The article **Canberra Leasehold System** — <https://www.prosper.org.au/2008/01/canberra/> — describes how the Founders wanted the rules of the Leasehold System to prevent land speculation by sharing unearned income fairly across the whole community. The article also outlines the implementation mistakes.

This article shows how we can return to the original vision starting with Affordable Tenancies for the Gungahlin Town Centre. It outlines lease conditions on undeveloped land changes to remove unearned income and stop speculative capital hurting the Gungahlin economy. The changes address community consultation needs and bring affordable commercial and housing tenancies to the Town Centre.



Affordable Housing and Commercial Tenancies

Everyone should have affordable housing regardless of their income. One definition is that a household should not pay more than 25% of its income for housing. Homeowners can spend more provided their extra payments build equity in their housing. The principle can also apply to commercial and community buildings. For example, the minimum percentage for commercial activities could be 25% of income, and for community organisations, it could be 5%.

The ACT Government can ensure the development of affordable tenancies by putting affordability leasehold conditions when selling Town Centre leases. Affordability conditions already exist for some low-cost housing units but not for all units or commercial or community tenancies.

Build to Occupy is an occupier-owned alternative to Build to Rent. It offers the same macroeconomic advantages as Build to Rent but allows occupants, with each rental payment, to build equity in the home they occupy. Part of each rental payment buys equity, and part is a return on investment to the current owner of the equity. Equity in Build to Occupy is a prepayment for rent for any tenancy. Shareholders own prepayments as equity rather than ownership of shares. The purchasing entity owns the property. The organisation's constitution gives the shareholders voting rights and governance rules. Prepayments save money as prepayments are a simple extension to the existing payments systems, while equity as ownership is expensive as it needs a separate trading system. The initial shareholders are investors holding equity as prepayments. Over time the tenants of the buildings acquire equity through the payment of rent and the associated transfer of equity.

Investor Returns

Prepayments attract a fixed discount set by the tenant organisation. For example, the organisation could give the same indexed returns as allocated superannuation pensions but twice as long. The remaining profits go to the holders of prepayments. For each \$100,000 balance, the average Australian Super Fund gives a \$300 monthly indexed pension for 14 years. A \$100,000 balance will provide the same returns for 28 years with prepayments.

Reduced Prices to tenants

Some of the remaining profits lower tenant rents. The lower prices come by removing the interest on the capital paid if the tenant had purchased the property with a loan. The leasehold conditions set the rent at 25% of a tenant's income. One way to compare the savings is to compare the cost of buying a home for a person with a given income and home value. With prepayments, a person can have a lower income and acquire a higher value home. Prepayments have further advantages over loans:

- Monthly rent can vary as income changes.
- Buyers do not need an initial deposit.
- The tenancy can have additional capital works and not affect rent.
- There is no need for mortgage insurance.



Selling tenancies and prepayment capital

Selling the tenancies and getting investment with prepayment capital advantages investors and buyers over debt-based finance. With the government selling the leases and with the rules specified in the contracts, it means high demand from both investors and prospective tenants. Fixed prices and returns mean the price does not determine who occupies a house.

Instead of using price, the government can specify the rules to settle contention. One set of rules could select tenants on need. When there are many with the same need, make a random selection. For example, if five people want a tenancy, they go into a lottery where the number of entries is the inverse of their income - the more income, the fewer chances. Investors are selected first from tenants or their superannuation funds.

Prepayments capital replaces shareholdings and loans. Prepayments capital gives the holder the right to participate in the governance of the holding organisation. The government can specify the governance arrangements in the leasehold conditions. For example, all holders of prepayments could have voting rights depending on the value of prepayments held.

With prepayment, capital tenants decide the building design. With loan finance, landlords determine importance. Landlords tend to minimise capital costs at the expense of ongoing costs, whereas occupiers consider the long-term costs. It means loans tend to build for short-term monetary gains, while prepayments capital make long-lasting, sustainable tenancies with high utilisation.

Summary

The ACT Government can ensure the development of the Gungahlin Town Centre meets the needs of the Gungahlin community through the lease conditions. Appropriate conditions will increase investor returns and reduce the cost of housing commercial and community services. The cost of developing suitable leasehold conditions would be a fraction of the savings made in developing the Gungahlin Town Centre.

The Australian Energy Market

KEVIN COX

We are fortunate that the ACT Government and regulated organisations seek feedback from ACT citizens. One of the main ways is with **YourSay** <https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/>. Other ways are submissions to government enquiries. The Gungahlin Community Council has representatives on various bodies and puts in submissions and feedback on the communities behalf. One of the bodies is the Evoenergy Consumer Representative Council (ECRC), of which I am the current representative. The ECRC members were asked to put submissions to an enquiry into the Rate of Return for the distribution and transmission electricity services and I put in a submission on behalf of the Gungahlin Community. This article outlines the reason for doing this and what was in the submission.

Regulating the Electricity Grid

The supply of energy is a capital intensive industry and the Rate of Return is the major determining factor in the price of electricity and gas. For those interested, this link <https://www.aer.gov.au/publications/guidelines-schemes-models/rate-of-return-instrument-2022/initiation> gives the method used by the Energy Regulator to calculate the Rate of Return. Consumers have little influence over the investment decisions made by energy production, retail, distribution and transmission companies and we depend on the Energy Regulator to protect our interests.

The electricity grid consists of transmission and distribution wires. Transmission wires are the large ones between large producers and places where electricity is consumed. For example, the wires from the Snowy Mountains to Canberra or the Wind Farms in Victoria to Canberra are transmission assets. Distribution assets are the local wires in Canberra.

The grid is a natural monopoly. There is no point in having two sets of wires running down a street. However, it means consumers have no choice of supplier, and there is no electricity market to set the price of electricity. To address this problem, the government created the Australian Energy Market Commission — <https://www.aemc.gov.au/> — to set the rules, including pricing, for electricity from the grid.

The mission of the AEMC is:

To work for Australia's future productivity and living standards by contributing to a decarbonising, affordable and reliable energy system for all consumers.

The members of the AEMC are appointed by the Federal and State governments, who also appoint the board of the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) — <https://www.aer.gov.au/> — to administer the rules set by the AEMC.

Setting the Price of Electricity

Australia has an existing electricity grid. Governments, private and public companies own different parts of it. Investment money is needed for capital works to expand, develop and maintain the grid. The returns on investment capital are a major part of the electricity price.

The organisations that own the grid are shareholder companies, and shareholders determine where and how investment money is spent. The task of the AEMC and AER is to set and administer the rules to meet the above mission — which is to



protect the consumer — while the company duties are to meet the needs of the shareholders and increase the shareholder returns.

Shareholders contribute capital to companies. At the moment, there is no way for consumers to contribute capital. Yet, historically, consumer money has built the network and continues to supply ongoing capital through the charges for transmission and distribution of energy.



Consumers' lack of a voice on the investment decision-making boards of shareholder companies makes it difficult for the AEMC to meet its objectives of affordable and reliable energy for consumers.

Recognising Consumer Capital

My submission to the AER outlines how to recognise consumer capital while leaving share ownership structures intact. Consumers could contribute capital directly by prepurchasing electricity at a discount. For example, a citizen could purchase 20 years of electricity and receive a return on their capital as a discount when the prepayment is used. If companies fund some investments this way, the regulators can require consumer representation at the



company board meetings. The regulator can require that consumer capital be obtained before loans or investor capital. Consumer Capital puts consumer money at risk in a similar way that share ownership puts shareholders money at risk.

When shareholders receive dividends, the regulator can specify that some of the dividends must be a return of capital. The capital returned can pass to consumers as prepayments. To make the system scalable and economically efficient, consumers can organise themselves as local non-distributing cooperatives. They can elect representatives to sit on the boards of regulated companies.

The local non-distributing cooperatives acquire capital when paying for their electricity. The cooperatives can have their own internal mechanisms for distributing the capital to members. The cooperatives can use the capital as collateral for batteries or solar installations loans. Local consumers can distribute the returns on capital as lower prices or more investments.

Summary

Consumer capital could give consumers a voice at the decision-making table of distribution and transmission companies. It does not change the existing physical or organisational structure of the Australian Energy Market. However, the consumer's voice in the energy market replaces the choice they would have in an unregulated non-monopoly market and strengthens the role of the AEMC. It makes the Australian Energy Market closer to an unregulated competitive market and makes electricity more affordable. It directs investments to more economically efficient forms of renewable energy.



Meet our local representatives in the ACT Legislative Assembly

RALITSA DIMITROVA

Part 1: Michael Petterson MLA

Did you know Gungahlin has five Members of the Legislative Assembly, also called MLAs? Did you know they are the officials who represent every one of us in the Legislative Assembly? Did you know who they are? Did you know their names? Have you ever met them out there? Did you know they are our officials, but prior to that, they are members of our Gungahlin community?

In the next editions of our magazine, I will introduce our local Members of the Legislative Assembly. I decided to ask them several questions aside from the daily politics, and give them an opportunity to tell us about themselves – what they enjoy, what their experience is, and what they think is good for the constituents to know. Because regardless of their stance on the political spectrum, our MLAs as our representatives, are there to listen to us and assist us.

Today I will introduce Michael Petterson MLA. Michael is one of the two MLAs representing the ACT Labor Party in the Yerrabi electorate, the electorate which our district of Gungahlin falls under. He was first elected in 2016 and was re-elected in 2020.



Michael, what is the aspect or part of your job as an elected representative that you most enjoy?

I like meeting people and hearing their stories. I think all elected representatives are fortunate that constituents will often have a level of openness in their conversations that they wouldn't have with any other stranger. As a result, I often hear extraordinary stories from all walks of life and from people I've literally just met. Some of these exchanges are deeply personal and I've promised to never share them, but some are so outlandish and entertaining they make for a great story to retell. It's hard to imagine any other job that let's you interact openly with so many different people. It's a tremendous privilege and it is part of the job I know I'll miss when it's over.

Who or what keeps you grounded in life, and how?

I try not to take myself or politics too seriously. Politicians do ridiculous things sometimes (myself included) and if you can't laugh about it you're taking yourself too seriously. It helps that my family and friends have an eye towards what I do for work but take more pleasure in gently teasing me about it than wanting to engage in substantive policy discussions over the dinner table. There's also something very humbling (and humorous) about being called a 'glorified councillor' by those unhappy with what the Assembly is doing. It's hard to have a big ego with a funny quip like that getting thrown around.

What should all residents know about engaging with elected members to get assistance and help they need for their everyday lives?

Elected representatives want to help you. If you need a hand with a local problem or you have a suggestion for the ACT Government you should get in touch with your local MLA as a first port of call because chances are we've previously helped someone with a similar issue or have spoken to your neighbours about the same issue you're experiencing. It's also helpful to have realistic expectations of the timelines required for change. If you're hoping to get a multimillion dollar infrastructure project underway or change longstanding ACT Government policies, then you'll have to rely on quite a few moving pieces to bring that to fruition. It's not impossible, not at all, it's how every good idea in the Assembly starts but it can take some time. The other thing that I wish more constituents knew was that the more information you give me about your issue, the better placed I am to help.

What is the single best thing you have learned since being an elected representative?

It's hard to pick just one. Ever since it was explained to me, I have always enjoyed telling people how to make an informed guess as to why their streetlight is out (hint: the number of streetlights out matters). I also had no idea how the streets and suburbs of Canberra got their names until it came before the Assembly. Now I'll take a moment to look up the meaning of a street name if it sparks my interest and I like to encourage people to be curious about the names that mark our city. If you're curious about where your street or suburb gets its name you can find it on various ACT Government websites.

What is your message to our Gungahlin community?

Gungahlin is a growing community that is younger and more diverse than the older and established regions of Canberra. There are many issues in our community that are unique to our district and are not replicated in other parts of the city. That's why it's so important that Gungahlin residents are vocal about what changes they want to see and to engage with the Assembly to bring them to fruition. On a more personal note, I'm always happy to have a chat about any local issues so don't be shy reaching out if I can be of assistance.



The Rotunda – the jewel in Gungahlin’s heart

RALITSA DIMITROVA

The Rotunda opened on 11 December 2021 with many dignitaries present, including the Hon. Andrew Leigh MP, Michael Pettersson MLA, James Milligan MLA, Andrew Braddock MLA and representatives of associations including the Gungahlin Community Council and Friends of Yerrabi, whose partnership was vital in achieving the outcome.

As it is something new in Gungahlin, you may not have heard of it yet. Therefore, I decided to ask Sandra Goldstraw, Charter President of the Rotary Club of Gungahlin, the organisation that made this dream come true.



How and when was the idea of the Rotunda conceived, and whose idea was that?

I enjoyed attending music events organised at the Botanical Gardens in January. I regretted that we did not have a structure in Gungahlin to hold community music or arts events. Having lived in Gungahlin since 1996 and seeing Gungahlin develop and grow over the years, the beautiful Yerrabi Pond is the only place in Gungahlin that provides space for a community gathering that children could also enjoy.

When I visited country towns, there always seemed to be a bandstand or rotunda in the park.

What motivated you to turn the dream into a reality?

As the Charter President of the Rotary Club of Gungahlin in 2008, our initial strategic planning included the idea of a Rotary community focal area in Gungahlin. Then, in 2015, we again reviewed our strategic plan. This time, I had suggested that a rotunda would be the perfect focal facility at Yerrabi Pond. As a small club, this was just a distant dream.

In 2019, Belconnen Arts organised the Celebrate Gungahlin Festival with a large band playing at Yerrabi Pond. I mentioned to Michele Grimson that a Rotunda would be great to have. When Michele sent me the Stronger Communities Grant programme in February this year, and reminded me of what I had said earlier: a grant could make my dream a reality.

I didn't think I had a chance of getting it. I sent in my expression of interest and couldn't believe it was accepted. My club gave approval and allocated funds to make a formal application. When I was successful with the grant, I was not confident that I could organise the project within the time frame by the end of December, let alone manage an event for the official opening.

How long did it take to turn the idea into reality?

The idea was from 2015, but it was too big a project for our club. It was only achievable through a grant, so it was only a dream until the Stronger Communities Grant became available. The initial expression of interest was in February this year, the successful grant in March and completion at the end of November.

What challenges did the project face?

Firstly, I had to believe I could achieve the dream as I had never managed a project like this. The initial size of the Rotunda was only going to be 6 metres in diameter due to the only available funds from the grant and my Rotary Club. It would take until August for approval from the ACT Government to build on the peninsular and not on my original planned site. Finally, the site was away from all the facilities.

When the Friends of Yerrabi heard about the Rotunda site, we got approval to change to the present central location on the grassed area through their government contacts. The Friends also suggested increasing the size to an 8-metre diameter as a more useful size for larger bands. We received an "at cost" quote for the concrete base through Ben Helmers at Woden Contractors. I then wrote to the Gungahlin Community Council requesting some financial support due to the increased size of the concrete Rotunda base. I was thrilled that the council provided the full cost of the concrete base. I am also very grateful that the ACT Government has supported the Rotunda by providing all the paths, connecting the power and landscaping, which completed the project.



What is the purpose of the facility?

The Rotunda provides a focal point for the Gungahlin community. A place for entertainment to bring the community together. A place where students can gain confidence in performing for the public and various multicultural groups can gather and enjoy themselves and demonstrate Rotary's support for the local Gungahlin community.

The Rotunda is available for upcoming events. Booking is through the Access Canberra website at: <https://form.act.gov.au/smartforms/landing.htm?formCode=1030>

What is your message to our Gungahlin community?

You can achieve your dreams if you believe in yourself to make a difference in the world. Also, it is okay to ask for assistance from others and not be surprised when support arrives to help you achieve your dream, just like mine.



Floating Wetlands for Gungahlin

RALPH OGDEN



The ACT Healthy Waterways program has been extended by the ACT Government after the original grant expired in June 2021. The project is planning a suite of infrastructure and programs like the H2OK public education program to help clean up our waterways and is beginning to build water quality assets.

One of two new infrastructure projects is the installation of floating wetlands at Yerrabi Pond. At this stage of planning and approvals, a total of 600m² of wetland platform will be installed split between two locations in the drainage from Amaroo (Figure 1). The wetlands will be deployed as multiple platforms to lower their risk of being damaged by winds or currents. This deployment is slightly larger than the floating wetlands recently installed in Lake Tuggeranong.

The floating wetlands will help reduce the growth of nuisance algae in the pond by lowering nutrient levels locally and directly competing with algae for light. Platforms placed in the small bay where stormwater enters the lake (at the top of Figure 1) will have the added benefit of shading out some of the ribbonweed in the bay. Water in this bay becomes quite stagnant and locals have complained of smells as the ribbonweed breaks down. One risk that needs to be considered is whether the wetlands can withstand storm damage when flows from Amaroo peak in large storms. This was investigated and is why some sections of the platform are being placed outside this bay where flow energy dissipates in the pond proper.

We expect quite lush plant growth on the Yerrabi floating wetlands, based on our experience with the floating wetland in Lake Tuggeranong (Figure 2). This will create habitat for waterbirds and other aquatic fauna and serve as an attractive addition to the lakescape for locals. The floating wetlands are scheduled to be completed in June 2022, pending approval and weather permitting.

In addition to floating wetlands, the ACT Government is investigating the costs and benefits

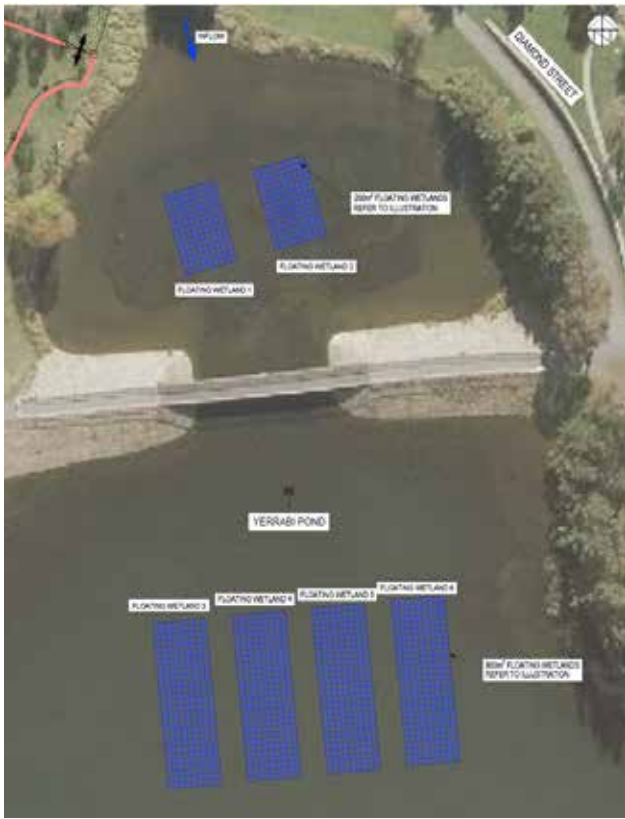


Figure 1: Possible locations for floating wetlands in the drainage from Amaroo into Yerrabi Pond. Other configurations are also being considered.

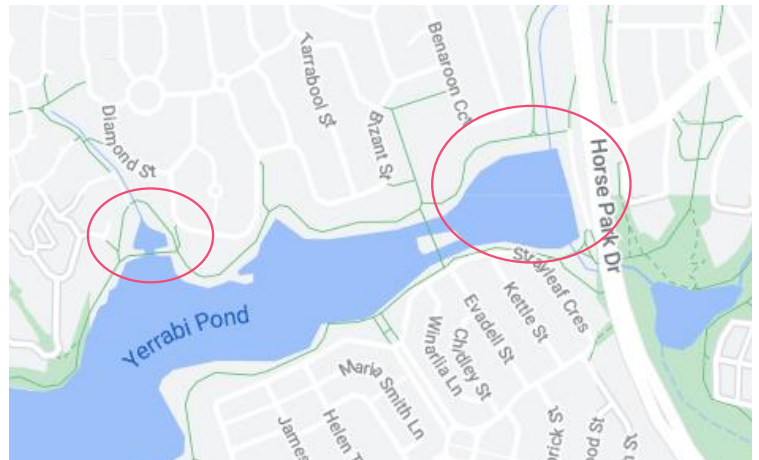


Figure 2: Two location options

of several innovative water quality assets to help clean up water across Canberra. Other innovations being explored are: leaky wetlands, water recycling, kerbs and trenches to encourage infiltration and natural cleansing of stormwater, bioretention swales and 'pocket' raingardens to protect water entering sumps, subsurface wetlands, and restoring cement drains to more natural channels.

While the installation of floating wetlands will help improve the Yerrabi Pond environment, much more needs to be done to reduce nutrient levels to a point where nuisance algae are a thing of the past. The Healthy Waterways team will create a catchment plan for Yerrabi Pond in the next couple of years that will plot a pathway to a cleaner future for the pond. It will include plans for both assets that filter pollution from stormwater, like floating wetlands, and infrastructure that helps restore some of the Yerrabi catchment's natural cleansing function, so that stormwaters do not get polluted in the first place. Solutions to Yerrabi catchment nutrient and sediment pollution will not only rely on improved infrastructure, but also building an awareness and understanding within the community about how we can work together to reduce blue-green algae within our lakes and ponds.



Figure 3: Floating wetland in the Village Creek bay of Lake Tuggeranong, December 2021. Photo: Andrew Crompton.

Plans for Gold Creek Homestead Precinct



Existing buildings to be restored

The planning for Gold Creek Homestead Precinct is well underway following recent community engagement conducted by Lendlease and prior to that, the Suburban Land Agency (SLA). Lendlease has exchanged contracts for the site with the SLA and is in the process of finalising its plan to prepare for lodgement of their Development Application. The aim is to deliver the project to the community in 2024.

The Gold Creek Homestead Precinct's 4.8ha site at 1 Monty Place, Ngunnawal is designed to comprise three integrated but distinct areas. Subject to approval, the site will add to the existing retirement community at The Grove Ngunnawal, include a new Arcare aged care home, and provide a central precinct for the community.

Retirement Living

45 premium retirement villas are planned as an addition to the neighbouring Lendlease village, The Grove Ngunnawal. It is proposed the single storey villas will have two or three bedrooms with modern layouts and the new village extension will include a produce garden, water feature, landscaped footpaths and green space for use by all residents of The Grove Ngunnawal.



Enjoying life in retirement living

Aged Care

Lendlease plans to partner with Arcare to deliver a quality aged care facility with more than 100 beds. It is proposed that the full continuum of senior housing services will be offered, including independent living at the retirement village and skilled nursing and dementia care at the aged care home, allowing people to age in place.

A central precinct for the community

A ground floor café in the aged care building is proposed and would be easily accessible from the central Homestead precinct, which will include elements of the original homestead cottage, kitchen building and hut. If approved, this would see these buildings and associated gardens restored and made available for the public to use.



Arcare

Community consultation

A Precinct Development Brief developed by the Gold Creek Homestead Community and Stakeholder Panel established by the SLA informed the early concept plan for the site. The plan has since been refined by Lendlease through a three-phase community engagement program.



Gold Creek Homestead (stone cottage, left) and kitchen wing - c. 1928, source ACT Archives

Refinements include modifications to the precinct street layout to promote safety; restoration of the homestead in a way that will suit its use for meetings, exhibitions and small-scale events, and design of the central homestead gardens to provide an outside space suitable for health and wellbeing activities, relaxation and potentially markets.

The design of the aged care building has been adapted to include a large, external facing café; more beds; and car parking designed in a manner that would provide a superior landscaped area and street frontage, balconies and patios.

The proposal showcases rural and First Nations history through landscape elements, signage, a bush tucker garden and yarning circle.

Pedestrian links would connect the precinct with the surrounding community through a public pathway across the block. A number of internal pathways will encourage pedestrian connectivity within the site and with the surrounding environment, and seating would also be provided along paths to allow a place to rest and admire the surroundings.



Slab Hut

A sustainable precinct

Sustainability was one of five key themes identified by the SLA and the Gold Creek Homestead Community and Stakeholder Panel and is an important focus. The proposal aims to deliver a carbon neutral and climate resilient precinct that supports health, wellness and liveability of residents and the local community and build neighbourhood connections.

Lendlease has committed to achieving independent industry certification of a 5 Star Green Star Communities rating for Gold Creek, while villas will be designed to meet the Gold Standard of the Living Housing Australia design guidelines. Age-appropriate design elements and fit out would include double glazing, water tanks, LED lighting, emergency call buttons and efficient energy solutions.

The proposed tree plantings would provide mature tree canopies contributing to shade and a comfortable microclimate on the site. Many of the existing trees would be retained, and Australian natives are set to feature strongly in new plantings.

The precinct is designed to have an abundance of trees, gardens and lawns, with more than 30 per cent tree canopy and 30 per cent permeable surface. Pathways would encourage pedestrian connectivity within the site and with the surrounding environment.

The precinct is designed to be a place where communities thrive, suitable for people of all ages to interact and enjoy.

To view the latest version of the Gold Creek Homestead Precinct plan, visit the project website at: www.visitgoldcreek.com.au. For more information or to discuss the project, phone Lendlease on 1800 550 550 or email connect@lendlease.com



'This Is My Brave Australia' (TIMBA)

RALITSA DIMITROVA

I met Tim Daly, founder of 'This Is My Brave Australia' (TIMBA), back in February 2021 at one of our local community markets in Gungahlin. TIMBA's stall caught my eye, and I decided to contact Tim and learn more about his initiative as I hadn't heard of it until that moment. I discovered a whole new world of people helping people. People from the heart of Gungahlin (Ngunnawal) who have devoted their lives and efforts to helping and supporting others on their mental health journey. This was a real jewel to be discovered. I realised that Tim does something very special for our Gungahlin community, and the Gungahlin community must know about it. I invited Tim Daly to speak at one of our next Gungahlin Community Council public meetings as I realised Tim's initiative was so noble and Gungahlin has a real hero in his face.

It is my pleasure to introduce Tim Daly and his initiative TIMBA to our Gungahlin community.

What is 'This Is My Brave Australia'?

Hi, my name is Tim Daly and I am the Executive Officer of 'This Is My Brave Australia' (TIMBA). I have lived in Ngunnawal for 30 years with my partner, Donna, raising two boys, now men, who both attended local Gungahlin schools. I have previously coached junior AFL at Gungahlin Jets and have been a Run Director/volunteer/runner at Gungahlin Parkrun. I also did a two-year stint as a volunteer at Vinnies Gungahlin.

I started TIMBA in relation to my own lived experience of mental health issues and in particular the stigma and discrimination that unfortunately can throw up barriers to people reaching out, receiving help and establishing self-help strategies.

As a community-based and grass-roots charity, funding, especially in the area of community mental health, is consistently a challenge and we are always looking for ways to raise funds within our community.



What are the areas of mental health and wellbeing in the community which TIMBA addresses?

The main area that TIMBA concentrates on is the reduction of stigma and discrimination of those with mental health issues. The earlier that strategies can be put into place to deal with deteriorating mental health (just like physical health), the better the outcomes. We do this through our main project, TIMBA: The Show, where local community members share their stories of dealing successfully with mental health challenges on stage as part of a theatre experience. Stories of lived experience are shared through spoken word, poetry, song, dance, short plays and visual arts to challenge the mainstream media view that people with mental health issues are different, non-productive, dangerous, or unemployable members of the community.

Through this exposure to real life, authentic stories directly from the person, audience members can change their perception of mental illness and view those managing a mental health issue as peers rather than outliers of society.

Recently we have also started our local mental health and wellbeing projects that aim to support those members of the community disadvantaged by circumstances including mental health issues, disability, domestic violence and economic disadvantage. All these projects are free to the people we support.

What are the future plans of TIMBA in Gungahlin? What challenges does your initiative face?

Our next project, which we started in 2021 but was curtailed by COVID-19, was the CREATIVE MINDS Gungahlin Mental Health Film and Arts Festival. It is well documented and researched that a vibrant arts community is a major indicator of the mental health and wellbeing of a community. However, there is an unfortunate lack of facilities, funding and infrastructure to support the arts community in Gungahlin. Through our festival and other arts-based activities we will be looking at contributing to a change in the Gungahlin area in the future. Of course, it goes without saying that we would like the support of local businesses and organisations to achieve this.

We are also supporting the push to establish a dedicated arts/community facility in Gungahlin. There is currently no community run and managed location open to all the community that artists/ community groups can access that is free or has reduced rates for practicing or displaying their craft or offer free inclusive community classes.

We are also looking for premises to store and sort all the donations received by the pantries and TIMBA Wardrobe so we can get donated items to the people and places that need them quickly. Currently Ngunnawal Street Pantry (NSP) and TIMBA have a small storage unit in Fyshwick and are storing extra goods at the respective residences, Unfortunately this does not allow room for sorting all the donations received.

We are urgently in need of a sponsored storage and sorting facility, preferably in Gungahlin/ Mitchell, to cut down on current transport costs and donations taking over spare rooms and lounge rooms. If any local businesses could look at helping us out, it would be greatly appreciated and would go a long way in supporting those in the community who are struggling.

If a member of our community would like to volunteer, how can they be of help?

People can contact us through our website at www.thisismybraveaustralia.com if they would like to volunteer for our wardrobe/pantry projects, our festivals or just administration roles within our charity.

What is your message to our Gungahlin community?

TIMBA is centred around the Gungahlin community; we are passionate community members striving to foster a more inclusive and supportive local environment in relation to mental health and wellbeing. We aim to deliver creative solutions to local issues, solutions provided by 'the community, for the community'.

What's so special about Gungahlin's Grasslands?

BILL GRAHAM

As you travel along Gungahlin Drive, you may have noticed the wide paddocks on each side.

They are grassland nature reserves: Mulanggari, Gungaderra, Crace and another, North Mitchell, in Franklin.

They were established to provide remnants of natural temperate grasslands and refuges for many species, including the Golden Sun Moth, the Striped Legless Lizard and Perunga Grasshopper.

Gungaderra Grasslands by Palmerston has lots of visitors, while the other three tend to go under the radar. I have been visiting Mulanggari, just to the south of Gungahlin Town Centre, since 2015 to survey birds, and it is an exceptional place.



Red-rumped Parrot
Photo by Julian Robinson

Unlike Mulligans Flat nature reserve, which has many visitors, the grasslands, which are less publicised, may seem less interesting and inviting. This gives them the advantage of being less busy, quieter, places where you can go to unwind.

Almost 90 bird species have been recorded there, with the most easily observed being Red-rumped Parrots, Eastern Rosellas, Australian Magpies and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. As well, there is a resident mob of about 90 kangaroos.

There is often a surprise in store as you walk around: ducks and ducklings and Australasian Grebes with their young on the ponds. You can hear frogs, see wildflowers and the occasional fox or hare. There is a rocky knoll with 360-degree views at the southern end.

Each nature reserve has access points and mown trails to guide you through. The last two seasons have been good, so the grasses are long, so sturdy shoes and long pants are advisable.

Access

- Mulanggari Grasslands nature reserve, Gungahlin can be accessed from Camilleri Way and Delma View, Newsome St and Alec Hope St in Franklin and by parking on the verge off Gungahlin Drive.
- Gungaderra Grasslands nature reserve can be reached from Bollard St, Palmerston.
- North Mitchell Grasslands nature reserve has access from Amy Whitting St and Christina Stead St, Franklin.
- Crace Grasslands near the Canberra Racecourse is not so easily accessible and is managed more for conservation value than recreation. (Gungahlin's Treasures p21.)

Importance

The reserves are managed by ACT Parks and Conservation, which aims to “improve the ecological condition and connectivity of the Natural Temperate Grassland and the habitat quality for declining woodland birds”. It protects trees that have been a roosting site of the vulnerable Superb Parrot (*Polytelis Swainsonii*). Grazing by cattle reduces plant material and improves habitat for threatened species such as the Golden Sun Moth (ACT Government 2019).



Figure 1 Map of Mulanggari Grasslands Nature Reserve (courtesy of Jen Smits, Spatial Ecologist, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate ACT Government).

Background

Mulanggari Grasslands nature reserve, is located due south of the Gungahlin Town Centre (see Fig 1). The reserve of (140) hectares was established in 1995 and extended in 2014 to include an environmental offset of 22 hectares (ACT Government 2019). The area has a long history of stock grazing; approximately one-third of the reserve is exotic pasture, one-third is native pasture lacking in forb diversity, and one third is natural temperate grassland. On ridge tops in the west and north, the grasslands grade into partially cleared Yellow Box–Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland.

Figure 1 Map of Mulanggari Grasslands Nature Reserve (courtesy of Jen Smits, Spatial Ecologist, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate ACT Government).

Wildlife corridors

The grasslands provide shelter for species that remain all year round and those that use them as wildlife corridors. As urban development spreads and wildlife habitat is lost, the grassland reserves become more important.

Management.

The management aim of the grasslands is to improve the ecological condition and connectivity of the natural temperate grassland, and the habitat quality for declining woodland birds is being fulfilled. Ecological grazing, controlled burns, weed spraying, and the management of kangaroo numbers are making the reserves closer to their original condition.

In recent years there has been an excellent regrowth of acacia and eucalyptus spreading out from mature trees. There is connectivity with Mulligans Flat and Gorooyaroo Nature Reserves, especially for the Superb Parrots, which use the reserves for feeding and roosting.

You may see seasonal migrants like Tree Martins and Noisy Friar birds, Brown Songlarks, Tree Martins and Lathams Snipe, which fly from Hokkaido in Japan.

More detailed information is available in the booklet Gungahlin's Treasures A Guide to Interpreting the Region's Heritage. Conservation Council ACT Region 2009.



Eastern Rosella
Photo by Geoffrey Dabb



Get involved with the ACT Container Deposit Scheme

The ACT Container Deposit Scheme (ACT CDS) is a litter reduction initiative that the ACT Government introduced. Participants collect and return eligible drink containers at scheme return points across Canberra for a 10 cent refund on each.

The ACT CDS is the smart way for individuals, community groups and businesses to reduce drink containers ending up as litter or landfill while raising funds. For more information about using ACT CDS to fundraise for a community group or charity, download the ACT CDS toolkit by visiting <https://actcds.com.au/community-fundraising/>.

Which drink containers are eligible for a 10c refund?

Always check the label for the '10c' symbol to determine whether the container is eligible.

Eligible drink containers are those that are commonly found in the litter stream and are smaller, more portable containers, between 150mL to 3L.

- Cans (aluminium or steel)
- Bottles (glass or plastic)
- Cartons (flavoured milk or juice boxes)

Please keep the lids off when returning containers.



To learn more about eligible containers, visit www.actcds.com.au/eligible-containers/

Returning your drink containers.

Gungahlin has multiple return point locations nearby. Participants can visit three types of return points – a Drop & Go Pod, a Drop & Go Point or a Cash-back Depot. Each kind of return point offers different refund options. Don't forget to set up an online account with ACT CDS network operator Return-It to receive an electronic refund – you do not need to set up an account for cash refunds.



DROP & GO POD

Recycling Drop Off Centre Gungahlin
3 O'Brien Pl, Gungahlin ACT 2912



DROP & GO POINT

IGA Nicholls
88 Kelleway Avenue, Nicholls ACT



DROP & GO POD

Amaroo Playing Fields
Horse Park Dr, Amaroo ACT 2914



CASH-BACK DEPOT

Mitchell
83 Grimwade St, Mitchell ACT 2911



Drop & Go Pods

Self-service and open 7am to 7pm, seven days a week.

Ideal for returning containers close to home.

- ✔ Electronic refunds
- ✔ Donations



Drop & Go Points

Self-service and staffed. Open during business hours and weekends.

Ideal for four to five bags of drink containers at a time.

- ✔ Electronic refunds
- ✔ Donations



Cash-back Depots

Staffed with automated counting systems. Open during business hours and weekends.

Ideal for larger quantities of drink containers and instant cash refund.

- ✔ Cash refunds
- ✔ Electronic refunds
- ✔ Donations

Before arriving at a return point, read ACT CDS' handy tips at www.actcde.com.au/returning-containers/

To see all return points across Canberra, visit www.actcde.com.au/return-points/

Butterflies of Gungahlin

SUZI BOND



Butterflies, along with moths, belong to the order Lepidoptera. They start life as an egg, which hatches into a caterpillar. The caterpillar needs to eat to rapidly grow, until it finally turns into a chrysalis (or pupa). This is the life stage that transforms the caterpillar into an adult butterfly. Most adult butterflies in Canberra emerge during the warmer months, so now is a good time to observe them. Gungahlin is a wonderful place for finding butterflies, with around 43 species recorded in the area – for context, the ACT has 91 species of butterfly recorded, and Australia has a total of 447 species.

Common species you can expect to see in suburban Gungahlin include the Common Brown, Australian Painted Lady, Meadow Argus, Common Grass-blue and the introduced Cabbage White. If you or your neighbours grow citrus, you may be able to spot the beautiful Orchard Swallowtail or the Dainty Swallowtail, as their caterpillars like to eat citrus leaves. Nature reserves like Gorooyarroo and Mulligans Flat are fantastic for finding butterflies that prefer the box-gum grassy woodlands habitat, and we are very lucky to have populations of the grassland specialist Yellow Ochre and the mistletoe specialist Dark Purple Azure here.

Gardens can be important for local butterfly conservation and the presence of butterflies can contribute to human wellbeing. Creating a butterfly-friendly garden is easy and rewarding. You can create breeding habitat and provide nectar resources, with almost immediate results. Consider how you might create breeding habitat to support caterpillars, by including plants that caterpillars need to feed on (for a list of plants please refer to the ACT field guide) and try to limit the use of pesticides. For adults, floral nectar resources are important, such as native daisies. Try to create spaces that have sunny patches for basking adults and add logs or rocks that can be used by caterpillars and adults to shelter from very hot, very windy or stormy weather (and for caterpillars to pupate). Where your garden is located will influence how many butterflies will visit; if it is close to natural areas or is positioned on a hill, you will attract more species.

If you do encounter a butterfly and want to identify it, here are some identification tips:

- If possible, try to take a photo. Try to record the upperside and underside detail of the wings, and take note of any distinctive features
- Consider where you were when you saw the butterfly, as many species have habitat preferences – some love gardens while others will be restricted to one particular habitat
- Get into the habit of using a camera and/or binoculars; with these you won't need to approach the butterflies so closely and they are less likely to be disturbed and fly away

Top: orchard-swallowtail-papilio-aegeu
Bottom: orchard-swallowtail





- Think about the time of year you saw the butterfly, as most species only fly for certain months of the year
- Consider obtaining a copy of The Field Guide to the Butterflies of the ACT to use as your Canberra butterfly reference book. It is available from the Australian National Botanic Gardens bookstore (<https://botanicalbookshop.com.au/products/fg-butterflies-of-the-act>) or from the National Library of Australia bookshop (<https://bookshop.nla.gov.au/book/field-guide-to-the-butterflies-of-the-australian-capital-territory.do>)

A fun and rewarding way to get involved with butterflies is to participate in citizen science, with two free apps and websites to recommend: Canberra Nature Map (<https://canberra.naturemapr.org/>) requires a photo of the butterfly and the website has a noticeboard of events and notices; and Butterflies Australia (<https://www.butterflies.org.au/external/home>) is a good option if you do a lot of interstate travel as it will accept sightings from across Australia.

Top: yellow-ochre-trapezites-luteus
Bottom Left: orchard-swallowtail-caterpillar
Bottom Right: dainty-swallowtail-papilio-anactus



Reports from previous editions:

June 1996

Interim Gungahlin Development Board established. The board will be responsible for advising the Government on the formation of a permanent Gungahlin Development Authority, overseeing the release of stage one of the Town Centre and continuing consultation with the community regarding the development of the Town Centre.

Kate Carnell at the GCC May meeting announced that she had asked the Department of Urban Services to commission a feasibility study concerning centralising of health administration and other functions in the Gungahlin Town Centre.

The Bruce Higher Intersection, and the possibility of an overpass (clove leaf) will be examined with the current plan for the William Slim upgrade.

May 1997

The NRMA is concerned that the consultative process for this project failed to grapple with the development of the John Dedman Parkway and Gungahlin's future needs. This apparent failure is as much a consequence of the protracted community debate that took place at these workshops as it is a characteristic of the design of the consultative process. The fact remains that existing and future Gungahlin residents deserve the levels of transport access that the rest of Canberra enjoys

June 1997

Gary Humphries accepted that the absence of a public toilet in Gungahlin was a problem, and would check how this could be resolved in a timely manner.

August 1997

Immunisation protects babies, children and adults from serious illnesses. Sometimes these spread quickly and break out at any time (epidemics). Epidemics put in danger the health and lives of people who have not been immunised.



Date : Second and Fourth Sunday of every month

Time : 9am till 1pm

Where : Parking lot between

Winyu House and Eastlake Gungahlin Club:

Off The Valley Ave and Hinder Street



Gungahlin Community Council

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