



PO Box 396
Dickson ACT 2602
4 December 2018

The Hon Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Planning and Land Management

The Hon Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Minister for Urban Renewal

cc Mr Andrew Barr and Mr Shane Rattenbury, Members for Kurrajong

**REQUEST FOR RETENTION OF SECTION 72 DICKSON FOR COMMUNITY
AND CULTURAL PURPOSES, AND A SUGGESTED STRATEGY FOR
REVITALISATION**

Dear Mr Gentleman and Ms Stephen-Smith

The North Canberra Community Council (NCCC) is writing to inform you of a motion passed with strong agreement and support at the NCCC meeting on 21 November 2018, concerning the retention and enhancement of Section 72, Dickson, for community and cultural use purposes.

The motion passed is at [Attachment A](#). A copy of the full position paper is at [Attachment B](#).

The NCCC seeks your support and commitment to the establishment of a Community Reference Panel, reporting directly to the Minister for Urban Renewal, to prepare a Community Brief and Compact to guide urban renewal for Section 72 from here on (see recommendations 1-4 of the position paper).

This strategy will help to ensure that the regeneration and revitalisation of this valued community precinct delivers broad community benefits and will avert the impending planning impasse likely to emerge from the currently divergent community and Government visions for Section 72.

Growing concerns expressed by NCCC members about the Government's intentions for Section 72 prompted the motion. These concerns can be summarised as follows:

1. Since the Dickson district group centre was first opened in 1964, Section 72 has been identified and valued for over 50 years as a community precinct containing a range of community uses and benefits. Its greenbelt status in conjunction with the Dickson group centre was part of the 1950s planning for Dickson. This served as a land bank and enabled subsequent development of services to support the need for community clubs, meeting spaces and cultural, arts and recreation opportunities within the inner north, as the population grew.

2. There continues to be strong community sentiment, expressed consistently at consultation workshops since 2014, that supports the planning and development of this resource into a high quality community, cultural and recreational precinct with significant parkland included, in order to supply future services and generate opportunities, in line with the plans to increase significantly the population density of the inner north.
3. Despite this ongoing support for retaining and improving Section 72's community service function, the design scenarios and latest concept plan produced by the Government's planning and consultation processes have increasingly emphasised and focused on higher density residential use as the dominant land use across the three blocks highlighted as potentially developable on Section 72.
4. The suggestion of some ground floor community-use rooms, and placement of street trees and green edges between the footprints of bulky 4-6 storey multi-unit buildings, as concessions, fails to address broader community aspirations for the enhancement of this precinct. These include additional facilities to support community, cultural and recreational participation, within a broad scale community parkland setting, including public open spaces that could support play opportunities, informal leisure use, community gardens and additional major landscaping.
5. The community has been positive and constructive in identifying a range of development opportunities for Section 72, consistent with its current character and zoning for leisure and other activities, and in ways that would complement those provided by existing Section 72 assets, i.e. the aquatic centre, ANCA, Northside Community Service, Majura Tennis Club, Majura Men's Shed, child care centres, dance school, Kingdom Hall and serviced apartments.
6. NCCC members are concerned that the Government is not hearing the community's very clearly stated vision and constructive suggestions for this valued site.
7. There are also unanswered questions about the Government's proposal for accommodating 'Common Ground' on Section 72. Questions remain about whether the pre-election commitment was in fact to locate it on Section 72 and whether the community should have been consulted to select a suitable location within a residential zone for 'Common Ground' elsewhere in Dickson or the inner north.

The NCCC considers that the best way for these concerns to be addressed is to establish a Community Reference Panel reporting directly to the responsible Minister. This forum would provide for negotiation of collaborative outcomes and deliver broad community benefits.

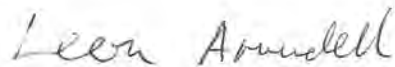
The NCCC believes that Section 72 has the potential to be an outstanding example of a thriving, modern, well-designed and coordinated community, cultural and recreational precinct. Capitalising on its existing assets and proximity to adjacent suburbs, schools, playing fields and Dickson's commercial centre, Section 72 offers huge potential to provide new co-located facilities and services, to support and

encourage broader community participation by inner north residents, as well as by other Canberrans and visitors using the Gateway precincts.

Retention and enhancement of Section 72 for community purposes would be embraced by current and future residents. It would build social cohesion and help facilitate and support successful densification across the inner north. It also would help the Government showcase a collaborative urban revitalisation process on a significant parcel of land, backed by community support.

The NCCC looks forward to receiving your support for and response to our recommended course of action, particularly the establishment of a Community Reference Panel.

Yours sincerely



Leon Arundell
Chair
North Canberra Community Council



North Canberra Community Council

Attachment A

Section 72 Dickson – NCCC Advocates for Community/Cultural Use

northcanberra.org.au/section-72-dickson-nccc-advocates-for-community-cultural-use/

NthCbr

That the meeting (21 Nov 18) requests the NCCC to advocate to retain Section 72 for community and cultural purposes, including, but not limited to, action on the six recommendations in the Working Group's position paper and in light of the issues and opportunities outlined in the paper.

The position paper's recommendations are:

1. That the government forms a Community Reference Panel that reports directly to the Minister for Urban Renewal with representatives from each of the local affected communities (taking in suburbs north of Macarthur/Wakefield). Its terms of reference should include preparation of a Community Brief.
2. That the government funds a Facilitator to support the work of the Community Reference Panel, distribute information, undertake and commission research, and act as liaison between the panel and the government.
3. That the Community Reference Panel be charged with examining and reporting on the concept of a Community Compact to guide urban renewal in the corridor from here on.
4. That the Community Reference Panel be charged with examining and reporting on setting up a Trust or statutory authority to manage Section 72 in the longer term.
5. That the current NCCC Working Group organise a petition to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly calling for a full Community Needs Assessment for the inner North, with work to begin in early 2019. That needs assessment should cover both private and non-profit service provision together with publicly funded services (eg. child care, sporting groups and fitness centres, arts and cultural facilities, play space, family support, disability support, aged care and senior citizen services etc)
6. That the current NCCC Working Group prepare an FOI request to discover what arrangements and negotiations and land valuations have taken place in relation to Block 22 (the Salvation Army's former Collection Centre), information about any undertakings made to Common Ground already, and initiate inquiries with the respective parties.

SECTION 72 DICKSON WORKING GROUP – POSITION PAPER

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the government forms a Community Reference Panel that reports directly to the Minister for Urban Renewal with representatives from each of the local affected communities (taking in suburbs north of Macarthur/Wakefield). Its terms of reference should include preparation of a Community Brief.
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ISSUES

1. As the population of the inner North grows, the demand for additional community services, public open landscaped space for recreation, arts and cultural facilities, short-term accommodation, and need for new unanticipated services and facilities will grow commensurately.
2. The published urban renewal projections anticipate rapid population increases within the next 10 years (over 30%). That increase will place significant pressure on existing services and facilities and must be planned for.
3. Climate change impacts will hit vulnerable groups hardest, generate additional stresses and are forecast to reduce both public health and public safety.
4. The ageing population will mean that more people fall into vulnerable groups, who often suffer inequitable access, poorer health and reduced mobility.
5. Increased density within the catchment combined with higher land values and less affordable rents and rates will place further stresses on vulnerable groups.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Co-location of existing and future community services and facilities with arts and cultural facilities, fitness centres, outdoor play space and recreation, and short-term accommodation is desirable. It enables more efficient use of space and shared facilities, and will attract more people to the area.
2. The block of land occupied by the Senior Citizens Centre in Turner could be released and redeveloped, funding their move to Section 72 and providing a surplus. This is only one organisation that has expressed an interest and there are likely to be others.
3. The block of land occupied by the ABC Studios in Dickson could be released by the Commonwealth and redeveloped for a major high-rise complex. If the ABC is to remain in North Canberra it will require an accessible site with sufficient space for its studio and offices.
4. Similar sites have been redeveloped in other States to deliver successful outcomes, such as Hazelhurst in Sutherland Shire and Camperdown Commons in Sydney. A review of the ACT Property Group's waiting list and consultation with ACTCOSS would identify many other opportunities, and expressions of interest should also be sought.

SUMMARY

1. The process undertaken by EPSDD since Stage 1 is regarded by all members of the NCCC'S Working Group as ineffective. The methodology adopted for consultation and 'community engagement' has had the effect of corralling discussions, limiting input from key stakeholders and meaningful information exchange, thereby confining the development scenarios on the table to a single land use option that is not representative of the range of views and values.
2. A full Community Needs Assessment for the inner North based on demographic forecasts, needs analysis and robust projections by both government and non-government service providers is essential and urgent.
3. The important research that should inform the planning for Section 72 has not been done. In the absence of a meaningful Community Needs Assessment, there is diminished capacity to carry out a social impact assessment of the proposal (to change the use and zoning for multi-unit housing).
4. There has been no consideration of the main alternative scenario that the Community Precinct continue to be developed for community, cultural and recreation uses consistent with its current CZ6 zoning, the overarching legislation that applies, and the status of the precinct as a land bank for this purpose.
5. The data supplied and many of the public statements contain errors and omissions that distort the conversation.
6. There remain many unanswered questions, concerning government intentions and actions to date, planning issues, budgeting for service and facility provision, social and environmental impacts.
7. The benefits associated with planning for a future Community Precinct that showcases quality design and addresses the challenges of sustainability within a framework of population growth, social, economic, and environmental change, are significant. These have been ignored.
8. In order to address community concerns, issues and opportunities, it's important to establish a combined community reference panel with the capacity and resources to produce an agreed Brief for Section 72, and investigate practical ways of managing urban renewal better in the future.