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Protecting, promoting and enhancing the economic, cultural, social and environmental well-being of the residents of North Canberra

The North Canberra Community Council receives funding and support from the ACT Government



Minutes: General Meeting 7pm 15 October 2025

Held online via Zoom

Accepted 18.2.26

Attendance: Jochen Zeil (Acting Chair), Marianne Albury-Colless, Bruce Smith, Leon Arundell, Marcus Hipkins, Amy Carrad, Ernestine Kirsch, Ian Hubbard, Petra Lean, Claire Miles, Frances (Ainslie), Jane Goffman, Katrina

Guests: Jonny Goodwin (Rachel Stephen-Smith's office)

Apologies: Sue Dyer

Minute taker for the meeting: Ian Hubbard

Presentations

1. Stellulata Cohousing: Speakers: Joss Haiblen and Ian Ross residents and project developers

Joss and Ian presented on their 7-year journey in constructing a co-housing in Ainslie. They discussed the concept of co-housing, construction, sustainability and the process of going through the development application process for an innovative build.

The Stellulata Cohousing project involved six residents living in a three-unit development with extensive shared facilities. Ian explained that the project is structured as a company rather than strata unit titles, and this has allowed for cooperative decision-making. Ian highlighted the sustainable features of the development, including solar passive design, solar panels, and water storage. He also described the community aspect of cohousing, noting that residents have formed strong relationships through the construction and now share common spaces like kitchens, bathrooms, and a garden.

The discussion focused on the challenges involved in developing a cohousing project in Canberra. Ian Ross and Joss explained that their seven-year journey involved navigating complex government approvals, including territory plan amendments, design review panels, additional community consultation. More reporting, time and money. This was despite support from the Government's demonstration housing program. They also highlighted the difficulties in dealing with various government bodies like Icon Water and ACT Revenue, as well as financing complications due to the cohousing structure. The conversation also touched

on the balance between community consultation and decision-making, with Ian Ross noting that while consultation is necessary, it can sometimes delay progress unnecessarily.

Ian Ross discussed a cohousing project in a high-cost suburb, highlighting how shared facilities reduced costs for residents. While the build quality was high and specific to the residents needs it might be relatively expensive. Both were relieved that the project had been completed. In hindsight, and half joking, Ian said it may have been easier for the six residents to buy units in part of a development and use that as a base to develop greater community. He emphasized the importance of collaboration, community building, and sustainable quality builds, and expressed willingness to share resources and information about the project through their website. Joachim praised the project as a good example of density and community building, while noting a lack of similar examples in Canberra.

Further information on the project is provided in Attachment A

2. Community Consultation – Future Use of 91A Wakefield Gardens, Ainslie

Speakers: Kyla Kerkow, Executive Group Manager, and Kristin Blume – Pipeline, Capability and Estate, Infrastructure Canberra.

Infrastructure Canberra is undertaking a community engagement process regarding the future use of the site and “This presents a valuable opportunity to work with the community and stakeholders like the NCCC to explore how this space could be used in the future.”

The local Ainslie community have been agitating for the building at 91A Wakefield Gardens and the surrounding precinct to be developed for greater community use and engagement. It has been boarded up for over twenty years. A number of interested groups came together for a forum organised by local independent MLA Thomas Emmerson (12 September 2025).

Picking up on this interest the Government commenced a ‘community listening’ exercise with a press release, media and information on YourSay ACT website. This included a survey for people to raise issues and provide their ideas for the redevelopment of the site.

Kyla indicated in her presentation that 114 people had responded the survey and the team had interacted with 180 people at the 6 pop-up information sessions conducted at the Ainslie Shops. They had also directly contacted a number of local groups that had a particular interest in the site and broader Wakefield Gardens Precinct.

The survey was open until the 7 November 2025 and a listening report will be written and released in December.

Issues raised during the discussion included:

- The importance of capturing the heritage and indigenous connections to the site and reflecting these in the redevelopment;
- The development of an affordable flexible community space that can be used by a range of small local groups – Haig Park community centre is underutilised because of the user-costs;
- A number of potential uses were raised

- Suggestion for a redevelopment process where the local community could be directly involved with the redesign and the potential for a design competition that engaged local students including UC architecture and landscape students
- Potential for insurance funding to be utilised to accelerate design and redevelopment in addition to a budget allocation.

Rachael Stephen-Smith is the MLA responsible for community facilities with decision-making around the redevelopment of the site likely to go to Cabinet

Further information on the project is provided in Attachment A

General Business

3. Acceptance of General Meeting Minutes: 16 July Minutes 2025 approved

4. Deputy Chair's Report [Jochen Zeil, NCCC]

Opportunity to meet with Fiona Carrick (Jochen and Ian) and discuss the Government's poor planning and consultation processes. Suggestion that a taskforce be established to encourage the Planning Authority to treat District Plans as dynamic document that includes involvement of the local community. Discussed the need to review the outcomes of the Northbourne Avenue Gateway Plan to see if they were achieved and impacts. To ensure impacts are acknowledged and not repeated in the Woden Gateway Plan. A number of people have described the Northbourne Corridor development as a disaster from the perspective of social contributions to the community. There was a need for the crossbench to get together and form a united front to improve planning in this City and community engagement.

Meeting held with the Conservator of Flora and Fauna and had a constructive discussion about the assessment of the conservation values at the Ainslie Volcanics site, opportunities for enhancing the greenspace and engagement with interested community groups.

Jochen has sent a letter to a Labor Party backbencher regarding telecommunications tower issues in Farrah that are remarkably similar to those in Ainslie. Potentially an opportunity to include infrastructure in the District Plans.

Dickson shop's 60th birthday party at being organised by the Dickson Residents Association 21 October 2025. A list of activities. Jane proposed a NCCC presence and help with a marquee and tables. May need to protect the cakes and there edible images

5. Treasurer's report

Bruce distributed the Treasurer's Report to the Committee. The current balance of the NCCC account is \$15,897.34. The independent reviewer has completed the review of NCCC accounts (the reviewer's report will be presented to the AGM). The acquittal of the 2024-25 grant has been submitted to, and accepted by, the ACT Government. Both components of the 2025-26 grant (total \$13,000) have been received. The Self-Assessment Review for required by the ATO has been completed.

Other Business

Ernestine sought advice from Downer on how to obtain toilets for Braddon, as the existing ones are appalling.

Jochen asked that existing NCCC position holders indicate their willingness to continue or otherwise.

Next Meeting: NCCC Annual General Meeting 19 November 2025

Keynote Speaker: Shane Rattenbury, Kurrajong MLA.

Topic: NCCC Key Themes 2025 Community Engagement and the provision of public and affordable housing). First meeting in 2026, Committee Meeting 18 February 2026

Additional Information for the Stellulata Presentation

Members might find it useful to review some of the following web links prior to the zoom meeting on the 15th.

- Video of NCCC general meeting of 19 June 2019 when the ACT Government presented their Demonstration Housing Project, and
- Joss and Trish and I explained our proposed Stellulata Cohousing development - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovQHw_oNxms&t=840s. [Scroll back if you want to see the government presentation.]
- A short, higher quality video (4 minutes) of Ian, Joss, Trish and Brett, our architect, discussing the sustainable design in 2019 - <https://vimeo.com/348545647>
- The 7-year history of our project as summarised by our website - <https://www.stellulata.com.au/>. The News section is basically a summary timeline of our project.
- The broad components of the Stellulata project are described in the sections on Community (the concept of cooperative housing), Design (the sustainable aspects of our building) and Process (the long approvals and construction journey we have now completed).
- An ACT Government website about demonstration housing projects including Stellulata, that includes a video of Brett Lowe Architect discussing our project - <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-projects/demonstration-housing-project/projects-with-a-site>
- A recent ABC News article on Stellulata after we had settled into the finished project - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-08-25/cohousing-communal-living-for-six-canberra-residents/105690652>

Links for Infrastructure Canberra's 91A Wakefield Gardens Community Consultation.

In addition to the NCCC presentation, **Infrastructure Canberra** is inviting feedback through an online survey and a series of local drop-in sessions. These activities are designed to gather a broad range of views from residents, service providers, and other interested stakeholders.

You can share your ideas and feedback via YourSay website

- <https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/shaping-future-91a-wakefield-avenue-ainslie>

Community engagement will run from **15 September to 7 November 2025**. After this period, we will review all feedback and share a summary of what we heard.

Additional background Information on the 91A Wakefield Gardens Community Facilities re-activation project can be found at <https://www.thomasemerson.com/wakefield>

Additional information can also be found at the Ainslie Residents Association website <https://ainslie.org.au/>