



Comment

**on the ACT Planning
and Land Authority's**

Molonglo Valley Structure Planning Study

**November
2005**

INTRODUCTION

ACTCOSS acknowledges that modern day Canberra has been built on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to their elders and recognise the displacement and disadvantage they have suffered since European settlement. ACTCOSS celebrates the Ngunnawal's living culture and valuable contribution to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) is the peak representative body for not-for-profit community organisations, people living with disadvantage, and low-income citizens of the Territory. ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS network, made up of each of the state Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS's objectives are representation of people living with disadvantage, the promotion of equitable social policy, and the development of a professional, cohesive and effective community sector.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

ACTCOSS receives funding from the Community Services Program (CSP) which is funded by the ACT Government.

ACTCOSS advises that this document may be publicly distributed, including by placing a copy on our website.

Comment on the Molonglo Valley Structure Planning Study

ACTCOSS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to ACTPLA's continuing consultations on proposals to create new suburbs in the Molonglo Valley. In particular, ACTCOSS would like to make a brief comment on the opportunities for low-income households in the new suburbs, and the presence of aged accommodation, community facilities and public transport corridors.

Opportunities for low-income households

ACTCOSS is particularly concerned that any new urban areas of Canberra are planned and built to accommodate a socio-economic mix of Canberrans, and not simply designed to maximise land sale revenue and create exclusive developments designed to only be available for high-income households.

ACTCOSS notes that the brief consultation documents make no mention of social diversity or affordable housing in the planning proposals. ACTCOSS is concerned that ACTPLA has not appeared to address these issues in any detail in its study. ACTCOSS reiterates previous concerns we have voiced about planning of new residential areas, such as East O'Malley estate and the Kingston Foreshore development, which have been exclusively targeted at higher income households with no provision for a mix of affordable and low-cost housing. ACTCOSS warns that these decisions have the potential to create exclusive enclaves within our city, which leads to increasing spatial concentration of low-income households and the accompanying social problems that can occur when disadvantaged people are forced to aggregate in less advantageous parts of the urban area.

ACTCOSS notes that the proposed development area has many attractive features, particularly its close proximity to services in Civic. This feature gives additional emphasis to the importance of locating affordable housing in the Molonglo Valley, as it will assist in reducing transport costs for low-income households.

ACTCOSS notes that more than 8% of ACT dwellings are public housing. If this proportion of the housing stock devoted to public housing is to be maintained then in excess of 1600 public housing properties need to be accommodated in the new suburbs. ACTCOSS would advocate for the early identification of public housing sites at the planning stage, thus reducing the costs of acquiring the additional properties by direct land grants rather than spot-buying properties developed by the private sector. In addition, serious consideration should be given to the prospect of direct land grants for the development of community housing.

Aged Accommodation

As Canberra's population ages, there will be continuing high demand for aged accommodation, which is already in short supply. The Molonglo Valley Plan should be an opportunity to expand the supply of aged accommodation, including for low-income older people, particularly considering its rural landscape setting, proximity to services and strategic location between Canberra's two public hospitals. ACTCOSS is concerned that little mention of aged accommodation has been made in the planning documents thus far.

Community Facilities

ACTCOSS notes that the information sheet on the built and social setting explicitly states that "Community facilities could also be included in the group centre, which is proposed to be located centrally for the eastern development area". ACTCOSS welcomes these comments, and would encourage ACTPLA to ensure that suitable, well-located sites be reserved for the development of community facilities at the earliest opportunity, and not simply left to some uncertain future date for identification. Identification of the need for and location of community facilities should be the subject of extensive consultation with community organisations before any final decisions are made.

Public Transport

ACTCOSS notes that the consultation documents do not show a dedicated public transport corridor for the area. In light of the relatively short distance to Civic and other Town Centres, ACTCOSS believes that the Molonglo Valley should encourage public transport usage by identifying bus routes early in the planning stages, and reserving public transport corridors for a potential future busway or light rail system in the area. ACTCOSS notes that the Canberra Spatial Plan indicates a "future public transport and road connection" linking Belconnen and Woden via the Molonglo Valley (Map 8), yet this is not reflected by a public transport corridor in the planning documents.

Further Information

If ACTCOSS can be of further assistance on this or any other issue, please contact ACTCOSS Policy Officer Llewellyn Reynders on 6202 7231 or llewellyn@actcoss.org.au.