**BETTER SUBURBS CONSULTATION – PRESERVATION AND UPKEEP OF PARKS IN DEAKIN**

I am writing on behalf of the Deakin Residents’ Association (DRA) to express strong support for the preservation, maintenance and enhancement of parks in Deakin. The DRA is a non-profit organisation whose objectives are to:

* Enhance the residential, suburban, social and environmental qualities of Deakin, consistent with garden city planning principles.
* Contribute through community discussion to planning and land management in the ACT as it impacts on Deakin residents.

Deakin residents value strongly the gazetted parks which exist in their suburb namely, Latrobe Park, Rosemary Dobson Park and the Lodge Park. They also value the substantial green space offered by the Deakin Sports ovals in front of the Mint. These parks are used on a regular basis by Deakin and other Canberra residents for recreational purposes such as playing sport, walking, practising golf and walking dogs etc. Some, such as Latrobe Park, operate as an extension of the Red Hill Nature Reserve where the trunks of dead gum trees are used for nesting purposes by both mammal and bird species.

There is a perception that Deakin is principally a suburb of older people. However, the renovation of the pre-school at the southern end of the Park has resulted in an influx of people with young families into the suburb. Residents who live nearby to the Park have noted a significant increase in the use of the playground near the Oval.

Preservation, maintenance and enhancement of these parks were identified as key objectives of the Deakin Neighbourhood Plan developed in 2004. These objectives have become even more significant today in the light of the ACT Government’s policies of densification and infill, where the value of land is at a premium and highly attractive to developers as a source of potential income. The trend towards more intensive development, with smaller gardens and limited room for children to play, highlights the need for these Parks to be maintained and enhanced.

Residents were particularly concerned at the decision by the ACT Government a couple of years ago to remove the electric barbecues from Latrobe Park and to de-commission use of the recently constructed toilet near the Oval. This action appears to have been taken unilaterally, without any apparent reference to the Deakin community. Previously the barbecues had been a popular place for family and community functions, while the toilets had been a useful facility for older people who walk regularly in the Park. It is understood that the Canberra Girls Grammar School was provided with a key to the toilets to enable girls to use them during sports practice on the Oval. It seems extraordinary that the general public has been prevented from doing so. The downgrading of facilities also raises questions about the longer term intentions of the ACT Government towards the continued use of the park for community purposes.

One Deakin resident has also reported a problem with people using the rubbish bins as a dumping ground, resulting in unsightly overflows of rubbish on the surrounding ground. This is being taken up with relevant authorities.

Because of the value placed by residents on the Park, the DRA urges the ACT Government to reinstate and replace the barbecues in Latrobe Park, as a vital and necessary community resource. It also seeks renewed access by the general public to the toilets. As mentioned earlier, the playground near the Oval is used frequently by local families. However, much of the equipment is tired and out of date and for a relatively small outlay would benefit from an overhaul, including the installation of some shade facilites.

DRA believes that actions along these lines would make a major and useful contribution to Deakin becoming a “Better Suburb”.

Helen Allnutt

Secretary

Deakin Residents’ Association