

CPAG newsletter 04/22

Focus: The new draft ACT Planning Act



Planning affects everyone. It affects our lives in both immediate and indirect ways. Whether you're stuck in traffic on a regular basis, suffer from noise and air pollution, or rejoice in the close proximity of green spaces and nature walks, it all comes down to planning, good or bad.

The ACT Government has released a draft New ACT Planning Act (Bill) for public comment. This proposed new Act is one part of a new planning system that will eventually include a new Territory Plan and new District Plans. Based on early reviews and assessments conducted by independent experts and available through CPAG and other community group websites, there are grave concerns with the draft new Act.

It is generally accepted, if not expected, that Governments conduct planning reviews every 10–15 years, in order to reflect new circumstances and practices. With the current Planning Act dating back to 2007, this review is certainly timely. However, the proposed new planning system represents a radical shift, from the existing rules-based approach, to an outcomes-based (or outcomes-focussed) approach. This new approach has the potential to affect all Canberrans, whether you live in a new suburb, or an older established part of Canberra, or in one of the growing high-density high-rise town centres.

With so much at stake, how much time has the ACT Government given its citizens to consider this complex and technical document of 700-plus pages? Three months! And, how many information sessions has the ACT government conducted which would enable interested citizens to engage with experts in order to understand what is intended? None!

Read on and get involved — your future and that of the next generation will be deeply affected for better or worse depending on the outcome of this.

ASSESSING THE DRAFT NEW ACT PLANNING BILL

"This proposed new ACT Planning Act is going in the wrong direction, if the intention is to restore confidence and trust in the planning system" says Richard Johnston, a Planner and former senior executive at ACTPLA. Since its public release Richard has spent weeks analysing the draft new ACT Planning Act and has found serious problems in areas including due process and transparency, public consultation, concentration of decision-making powers, lack of oversight, the list goes on.

Richards's assessment is available here:



[READ THE ASSESSMENT](#)

OUTCOMES-FOCUSSED PLANNING — THE SPURIOUS FOUNDATIONS OF ACT PLANNING REFORM

In his recent presentation to a CPAG Discussion Forum on the new draft ACT Planning Act, Bruin Christensen spoke of the known pitfalls of outcomes-focussed planning which include problems such as increased complexity, inefficiency and unimaginative box-ticking; he concluded that there are no provisions in the draft new ACT Planning Act to address these known problems. Why is there no attempt made in this new Planning Act to avoid them?



[READ BRUIN'S PRESENTATION](#)

LIMITING THE PLANNING AUTHORITY'S POWER

In his paper, Tim Field of the Red Hill Residents' Group is taking a close look at the proposed concentration of decision making power to be given to the Planning Authority and indeed to one person, the Chief Planner. Tim also draws on other policy areas from the recent past where a shift to 'outcomes-focussed' legislation went horribly wrong and provides suggestions on how to mitigate against undesired outcomes.

"Concentrated power is not rendered harmless by the good intentions of those who create it."

Milton Friedman

[READ TIM'S PAPER](#)

Do you write about Canberra Planning?



Have you or your group conducted your own enquiry into the draft new ACT Planning Act? We're interested to hear from you about the issues as you see them in the New Planning Act.

In this way our hope is that, together with you, CPAG can collectively create an informed and ambitious forum that makes meaningful contributions to the planning system reform.

Get in touch and join other writers via the email address below or the contact page on the CPAG website.

And please forward this newsletter to anyone interested in planning in our city of Canberra, the National Capital.

[Get in Touch](#)

What have we been up to?

CPAG has been holding several well-attended discussion forums both on-line and in gatherings at various venues. The aim was to bring together individuals and representatives from community groups as well as experts to discuss one thing: the draft new ACT Planning Act. Among the assessments and suggestions, two calls clearly stand out:

1. **An extension of the public consultation period of at least six months;**
2. **That the whole New Planning System be presented, including the Territory Plan and the District Plans, so that a proper assessment can be made of how the new planning system is to work.**

Canberra Planning Action Group

CPAG is a volunteer community group, formed early in 2019, in response to widespread and growing discontent by community groups and individuals with the ACT planning and approvals processes. By addressing the underlying drivers of the ACT Planning System, CPAG seeks to inform and create a united community voice for all those who want a more inclusive, socially just and ecologically sensitive approach to planning for Canberra.

[Find Out More](#)

You are receiving this email from the Canberra Planning Action Group (CPAG), as in the past you have indicated your interest in being included - if this has changed, please let us know or unsubscribe via the link below.