

Planning

ACT Labor believes having a well planned city is about making life as good as it can be for our community. While planning can be complex issue, ACT Labor believes the aim of good planning policy is very clear – to build a better city and a stronger community.

Canberra is one of the world's great planned cities and ACT Labor believes in maintaining our unique place in the world with good planning policies that strike a balance between the need to house Canberrans and grow as a city, while at the same time protecting our quality of life and our environment.

Since coming to office, ACT Labor has managed the growth of our city, recognising that we need to expand in a sustainable way. We have set the city on a course that sees both new developments on the outskirts of our city such as in Gungahlin, as well as in inner areas such as East Lake and Molonglo. We also recognise the need for new housing, especially affordable housing, to be available in our suburbs, close to town centres and the city.

ACT Labor has been responding to Canberra's changing demographics and is providing for a more diverse range of housing options for our community with more flexible planning policies to allow for these demands to be met.

The ACT Labor Government established the independent Planning and Land Authority and vested power in this independent Authority to make decisions regarding development assessment.

ACT Labor has also reformed our planning system and has introduced new planning regulations that aim to protect the amenity of life in our suburbs while at the same time providing the diverse housing options needed by a changing Canberra.

Our policy balances the community need for new and different housing close to town centres and transport links, while at the same time protecting the quality of life in our suburbs.

Only ACT Labor will strike the right balance between growing and developing our city while at the same time maintaining quality of life for Canberrans.

With these reforms, Canberra has maintained its reputation of being a great planned city. We lead Australia in implementing new reforms to make planning simpler for all those involved and we also lead the nation in our response to creating more affordable housing for our citizens.

Jon Stanhope
Chief Minister

Andrew Barr
Minister for Planning

A Proud Record of Planning for a Better City and a Stronger Community

Since being elected in 2001, ACT Labor has managed the growth of our city, recognising that we need to grow in a sustainable way. We have set the city on a course that sees both new developments on the outskirts of our city such as in Gungahlin, as well as in inner areas such as East Lake and Molonglo. We also recognise the need for new housing, especially affordable housing, to be available in our suburbs, close to town centres and the city.

Canberra is experiencing demographic shifts. We now have smaller household sizes and an ageing population creating demand for a more diverse range of housing options for our community and the need for flexible planning policies that provide for these demands.

ACT Labor has also established the independent Planning and Land Authority and vested power in this independent Authority to make decisions regarding development assessment. This has ensured decisions regarding developments are independent of political interference and that decisions are being made by experts in the planning field.

ACT Labor has reformed our planning system. We have done this so that planning is focused on preparing our community for the challenge of climate change, making housing more affordable and making it easier to do business in the territory through simpler, faster and more effective planning regulation.

ACT Labor has introduced new planning regulations that aim to protect the amenity of life in our suburbs while at the same time providing the diverse housing options needed by a changing Canberra. Following years of unrestricted and rampant over-development in our suburbs under the previous Liberal Government, ACT Labor has introduced the Garden City provisions. This policy has protected 85% of our suburban areas from re-development. The provisions also ensure that where re-development does occur in our suburbs there are links to shops, open space and transport.

Our policy balances the community need for new and different housing close to town centres and transport links, while at the same time protecting the quality of life in our suburbs. These provisions also provide opportunities for Canberrans looking for more affordable housing, such as townhouses, to access that accommodation in areas other than the fringes of our city. For older Canberrans, it means many can move into smaller and more manageable accommodation in the areas they have lived and raised families, rather than having to move to outer suburbs.

Ensuring an independent planning voice

ACT Labor believes decisions regarding development in our city are best removed from political imperatives.

ACT Labor has:

- Established the statutorily independent Planning and Land Authority. This independent Authority is responsible for all assessment of developments and all decision making regarding allowing developments to go ahead; and
- Established the position of the Chief Planning Executive, employed to advise government and the community on planning issues in the Territory.

Laying out a planning vision

ACT Labor believes in the need to balance the development and growth of Canberra with the environmental and social sustainability of our community. We also believe in informing the community of the direction planning in the ACT is taking.

ACT Labor has:

- Established and released *The Canberra Plan*, to guide the development of Canberra over the coming generation;
- Developed and released *The Canberra Spatial Plan* to provide the community with information about the planning and development of Canberra over the next 30 years. It is the Territory's key strategic planning document for directing and managing urban growth and change and reflects the community's views on where the future of our city lies; and
- Issued its second Statement of Planning Intent in June 2007 to inform the community and guide planning policy in the ACT for coming years. ACT Labor has identified among its priorities providing affordable housing for Canberrans, responding to climate change and building Gungahlin.

Making houses more affordable

ACT Labor believes one of the most fundamental rights for Canberrans is access to safe and affordable housing. In recent years Canberra, like many other parts of Australia, has faced a crisis in housing affordability with rising house prices and interest rates taking the dream of home ownership further away from many families.

In 2007, the ACT Labor Government produced the Affordable Housing Action Plan. This Plan comprises a number of initiatives aimed at making housing more affordable across Canberra. The action plan included 62 initiatives to help increase the supply of affordable housing including the introduction of more compact housing, the development of a land rent scheme, increased levels of land supply, greater levels of community housing and more affordable housing partnerships with private sector investors.

ACT Labor, along with industry and the community, have achieved a great deal together, with all 62 initiatives contained in the original plan now actioned.

Since the release of the Affordable Housing Action Plan, the ACT Labor Government has:

- Released a record 3,400 blocks to the market in 2007-08 and adopted a new rolling five-year land release program;
- Streamlined land release and approval processes, and englobo land releases;
- Funded extra positions within the ACT Planning and Land Authority to discourage land banking and ensure land is being built on in a timely fashion;
- Introduced new fees for developers not meeting their statutory timeframe in building on new blocks of land;
- Mandated the delivery of house and land packages priced between \$200,000 and \$300,000;
- Provided stamp duty concessions for low-income earners and pensioners;
- Increased the stamp duty income threshold by 20 per cent to \$120,000;
- Allowed the deferral of stamp duty payment for up to 5 years for eligible home buyers;
- Introduced the land rent provision to enable more low-income families to purchase their own home;
- Invited institutional investors to provide affordable private rental accommodation;
- Boosted community housing with an equity injection of \$40 million and a loan facility of \$50 million;
- Ensured that better and more targeted use is made of public housing - 87 per cent of new allocations are made to applicants in urgent need of housing compared with just over 38 per cent nationally;
- Implemented measures to improve the energy efficiency of the public housing stock to reduce energy costs for public housing tenants;
- Commenced a pilot program aimed at helping young tenants to build supportive community networks;
- Released two demonstration villages to showcase affordable land and housing packages; and
- Funded a design award for excellence in affordable housing.

Responding to climate change

ACT Labor recognises that future planning of our city has a major impact on our environmental sustainability and we are committed to growing our city in a sustainable way. We have been working with the community and experts in an effort to establish planning policies and regulations that reduce our impact on the environment.

To help combat the effects of climate change on our community, ACT Labor has:

- Required all new housing to have a 5 star energy rating;
- Established the Water Sensitive Urban Design guidelines, requiring a 40% reduction in drinking water use in new developments;
- Prioritised sustainability in the design of our newest development, Molonglo. Molonglo will have ready access to major transport routes and will improve social amenities available to the existing region to Weston Creek which Molonglo will border;
- Formed a partnership with the CSIRO for the development of East Lake, ensuring the area is a nation-leading showcase of sustainability;
- Released publications designed to help Canberrans build and live in more environmentally sustainable homes including:
 - o *Building better homes for Canberra's climate* which provides information about how to best orientate houses for optimal winter warmth and summer cooling thus reducing the need for energy intensive heating and cooling systems. The document also shows how to reduce energy use through insulation and glazing and how to minimise water use;
 - o *Your Home: Renovator's Guide* contains useful checklists to help people improve the environmental impact of their home when renovating; and
 - o *Selecting a Greener, Better House* is a checklist to help people know what to look for in a house they are considering buying or renting.

Making our planning system simpler, faster and more effective

ACT Labor has worked with industry and the community to design a planning system that cuts regulation but still allows Government to ensure that the community's environmental, social and economic future is considered in every planning decision.

ACT Labor has:

- Implemented a new planning system through the development of a new Territory Plan and a new *Planning and Development Act*;
- Adopted a national best practice planning model to ensure the ACT leads the nation in planning processes and outcomes;
- Cut red tape by increasing the amount of simple building work which is exempt from assessment;
- Added to housing affordability by making housing in greenfield areas, that comply with the rules, exempt from the Development Assessment process;
- Simplified the system for all those who come into contact with it, with a new track system for all developments;
- Consolidated and simplified the Territory Plan to make it easier to use; and
- Signed a bilateral agreement between the ACT Labor Government and the Federal Labor Government that will see both Commonwealth and ACT environmental impact assessment requirements integrated into one joint process.

Protecting our Garden City

ACT Labor has introduced new planning regulations that aim to protect the amenity of life in our suburbs while at the same time providing housing options in our suburbs close to town centres and the city.

ACT Labor has:

- Ended the unrestrained high density re-development of our suburban streets that occurred under the previous Liberal Government by introducing the Garden City provisions;
- Protected 85% of Canberra suburbs from high density re-development; and
- Recently further tightened regulations, restricting suburban streets from high-density apartment developments.

Planning for the future

ACT Labor recognises the need for our city to continue to change and develop as our community grows. Under ACT Labor, Canberra has continued to prosper as we have revitalised older parts of our city through new planning regulations, as well as built up new areas.

Civic: The heart of our city

ACT Labor believes that a strong, vibrant city centre is essential for maintaining a high quality of life for Canberrans and we have begun revitalizing our city centre in an effort to breathe life back into our city and make it a hub of activity for Canberrans.

ACT Labor has:

- Developed the Canberra Central program which has resulted in the revitalisation of city west, Childers' street and City Hill;
- Worked with the ANU to develop the ANU Exchange in City West, creating a hub of activity and employment in that area of the city;
- Revitalised Childers Street, with new street furnishings and pavements to complement the ANU Exchange development;
- Upgraded the western end of City Walk, with new a new streetscape and paving, creating a link between eastern and western Civic;
- Released section 63 in the city for major development that can include retail, residential and commercial space; and
- Released and completed development on Section 83 in the city, with Queensland Investment Corporation bringing a major retail hub to the area as well as creating an employment centre.

Revitalising Braddon

The Braddon commercial area provides a range of services for city workers and local residents. Over the past 20 years the area has developed a unique character, merging light industry and car yards with art galleries, outdoor shops and restaurants. This transition has been gradual, resulting in a character that contrasts with other areas of the city.

ACT Labor has:

- Recognised the unique character of this area and completed a planning study to investigate how to better utilise Braddon;
- Changed planning regulations to allow for greater height limits and the better mixing of retail, residential and commercial uses; and
- Allowed for the revitalisation and modernisation of Braddon through planning outcomes that encourage more use of the area by Canberrans, making the area more cosmopolitan.

More services and better infrastructure for Gungahlin

Recognising the rapid growth of the Gungahlin community and the demand for community facilities and infrastructure, ACT Labor has expedited the delivery of several community facilities.

ACT Labor has:

- Provided for employment growth in Gungahlin town centre by increasing the amount of commercial land that will be released in coming years and removing the height restrictions on buildings, so as to encourage a commonwealth agency to relocate to Gungahlin;
- Completed the Gungahlin Town Centre Planning Study and consulted with the Gungahlin community on future development of the Town Centre;
- Provided \$61.7 million for a new secondary college in Gungahlin. This includes a joint secondary college, community library and CIT campus;
- Funded the design of an enclosed oval for Gungahlin. This competition facility is to be designed to accommodate AFL as well as rectangular football codes like league, union and soccer;
- Committed \$20 million, if re-elected, to the building an aquatic centre for Gungahlin, including a 50m pool and courts for indoor sport;
- Invested over \$325,000 to design a public park to be located with the Gungahlin College; and
- Invested \$18 million for the construction of a community health centre in Gungahlin.

Modernising Belconnen

ACT Labor has recognised that Belconnen Town Centre is in need of revitalization.

ACT Labor has:

- Changed the planning guidelines for Belconnen to allow a major town centre upgrade which will include an expansion and reconfiguration of Belconnen Westfield; and
- Committed \$16 million over the next three years to replace the Belconnen bus interchange with a new facility fully integrated with Belconnen Mall. This will allow safer and more convenient access to the bus interchange from the shopping centre.

Rejuvenating Woden

ACT Labor recognises the need to draw more people to Woden Town Centre to live, work and relax.

ACT Labor has:

- Changed planning regulations to reflect the Woden Town Centre Master Plan to allow for a wider range of development in the Centre;
- Protected the Phillip Pool and Ice Skating Rink in the Territory Plan, ensuring the continuation of recreation facilities for the Woden community;
- Invested over \$3m in upgrading Phillip Oval;
- Committed, if re-elected, to providing a performing arts centre at Canberra College for wider use by the Woden community; and
- Created more than 350 new parking spaces to help support community facilities such as the oval and the Swimming and Ice Skating Centre.

Moving Forward

Preparing for the future

ACT Labor will build on the work already undertaken in areas such as Woden, Belconnen and Braddon and investigate ways of preparing our town centres and group centres for the future.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will:

- Invest \$400,000 in master plans for Kingston and Dickson group centres. The master plans will examine the needs of the community and businesses of Kingston and Dickson and provide a long-term planning strategy that reflects the community's needs and those of the business community. The Plans will focus on the improvement of the group centres of Kingston and Dickson;
- Examine whether there is enough access to supermarkets in these areas with a view to ensuring greater competition amongst retailers and greater choice for consumers; and
- Invest \$200,000 in a planning study and master plan for the Tuggeranong Town Centre.

Promoting Sustainable Housing

ACT Labor is committed to informing Canberrans of the measures they can take when building, renovating or buying a home, to help combat climate change.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will:

- Invest \$400,000 over four years in a communication campaign to inform Canberrans how they can contribute to combating climate change through sustainable housing choices;
- Distribute three publications designed to help Canberrans build and live in more environmentally sustainable homes. The publications are:
 - o *Building better homes for Canberra's climate* was produced by the ACT Planning and Land Authority and provides information about how to best orientate houses for optimal winter warmth and summer cooling. It also advises on how to reduce energy use through use of insulation and glazing and how to minimise water use;
 - o *Your Home: Renovator's Guide* was produced by the RMIT with funding and support provided by most Australian Governments including the Stanhope Government. The Guide contains useful checklists that will help people think through their options when renovating their homes;
 - o *Selecting a Greener, Better House* is a checklist to help people know what to look for in a house they are considering buying or renting;

- Continue to play an important role at a national level in developing responses to climate change through the built environment. This includes national principles for energy and water reduction through land use and infrastructure design, national targets for energy efficiency for buildings, participation in the preparation of the 'your development' package and the response to the National Adaptation Framework;
- Continue our partnership with the CSIRO to create one of Australia's most sustainable communities at East Lake; and
- Bring high levels of environmental standards to the development of Molonglo following on from the Strategic Environmental Assessment currently being jointly undertaken by the Commonwealth and ACT Governments.

More solar efficient housing

Part of combating climate change is ensuring new developments are as environmentally sustainable as possible.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will:

- Mandate passive solar orientation of stand alone blocks in new subdivisions;
- Develop and implement legislation protecting solar rights;
- Engage with industry to review the sub-division solar rating tool, which has not been reviewed since the early 1990s, with a view to linking block and house rating tools to allow for a better melding of house design and block orientation;
- Consult with industry to alter the current solar access rules in the Territory Plan to ensure a better mechanism for measuring energy gain rather than just a simple amount of sunlight required. For example, currently there needs to be a minimum of three hours direct sunlight, the changes will instead measure energy gained from the sun throughout the day; and
- Work with the community and industry to implement, over the next ten years, carbon targets for entire estates. This would entail identifying a carbon target or limit for the entirety of a new suburb or estate development.

Molonglo

Molonglo, Canberra's newest community, is an example of ACT Labor's commitment to reducing unsustainable urban expansion and to establishing homes within a 7.5km of the City Centre. The planning for Molonglo and North Weston embodies an integrated approach to social, economic, environmental and transport planning.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will:

- Release land for homes in North Weston and Molonglo;
- Plan and set aside land for community services such as libraries, shopping centres, health and medical facilities, child care centres, and sport and recreation facilities for the Molonglo community;
- Establish high levels of connectivity between neighbourhoods to allow for walking as well as shared bicycle and pedestrian paths;
- Maintain open space corridors throughout Molonglo that link Stromlo Forest Park, the Molonglo Rover Corridor and the Canberra International Arboretum;
- Assess Molonglo as one of the areas for light rail;
- Guarantee no development of central Molonglo;
- Retain the existing pockets of Yellow Box-Gum Grassy Woodland in East Molonglo;
- Locate bushfire buffer zones outside the Kama Nature Reserve; and
- Investigate storm water management options and undertake an EIS and community consultation on the preferred option.

Protecting our suburbs

ACT Labor believes we need to continue to find the right balance between growing and developing our city and maintaining the high quality and amenity of life Canberrans cherish.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government:

- Guarantees no return to the rampant over re-development of our suburbs that occurred under the previous Liberal Government;
- Will continue to monitor the garden city provisions to ensure the balance between growth and amenity is achieved; and
- Will continue to allow some redevelopment in suburban areas to accommodate the different housing demands of Canberrans as our demographics shift and to provide housing alternatives in suburbs close to our town centres and our city centre.

Community engagement

ACT Labor is committed to consulting with the community on all planning issues in the Territory.

To ensure maximum community engagement in planning, a re-elected ACT Labor government will:

- Require all development applications to have bigger notification signs in line with the size of the development. The minimum size for notification signage will rise to 600mm x 900mm, and will be full colour;
- Signs for large developments, falling in the impact track, will be required to be 1200mm x 900mm; and

- Streamline where notices are put in the *Canberra Times*, with one community noticeboard for all Government announcements, including development assessment notifications.

Managing Canberra's growth

As Canberra's population grows and demand for new and affordable housing increases, ACT Labor will continue to plan new suburbs in accordance with the Canberra Spatial Plan.

Along with providing for new growth in appropriate areas, ACT Labor has continued to plan for residential intensification in existing areas of the city.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will:

- Release land in North Weston and Molonglo, providing sustainable housing for Canberrans close to town centres and other amenities;
- Release land in the East Lake development, set to be one of Australia's most sustainable developments. East Lake is located just 4.5km from Civic and incorporates parts of Kingston, Griffith and Fyshwick. East Lake aims to become a high-density urban community providing an Australian showcase of sustainable development. The ACT Government has partnered with the CSIRO to ensure the use of leading edge science and innovation in the area of sustainability. Over the past year, various technical investigations and extensive community consultation has been undertaken;
- Continue to develop and grow Gungahlin with land release and new community facilities; and
- Continue to undertake work with the NSW Government to ensure sustainable growth in the capital region. ACT Labor is developing, with the NSW Government, an ACT/NSW Cross Border Region Settlement Strategy, having regard to the Canberra Spatial Plan and the Sydney to Canberra Corridor Regional Strategy. The Settlement Strategy and the 2006 Cross Border Settlement Memorandum of Understanding will ensure growth management and sustainable development within the Capital region.

Employment Growth

ACT Labor will continue to plan for future employment growth in Canberra.

A re-elected ACT Labor Government will complete the Eastern Broadacre Planning Study. This study is examining an eastern corridor of the ACT, identified in *The Canberra Spatial Plan* for the growth of industrial, commercial, broadacre, tourism and other uses. The area is in close proximity to the city, existing industrial areas at Hume and Fyshwick, and existing transport infrastructure including the Monaro Highway and Canberra International Airport. It is envisaged that further planning in this area would see employment consolidated into precincts that are well served by public transport and easily accessed from proposed residential projects at East Lake, Queanbeyan City Council, and in the long term, at Kowen.