

2 Gray Place
WESTON ACT 2611

Mr Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Planning and Land Development
Member of Legislative Assembly

Dear Minister

My name is Nancye Burkevics and I have been a proud resident of Canberra since the 1940's. I love the open spaces that Canberra provides but I also understand the importance of responsible development, particularly when it benefits small community clubs. I am therefore writing in support of the Murrumbidgee Country Club and its proposal to develop up to 3 small tracts of unused golf course land.

Murrumbidgee is Tuggeranong's only golf club. It aims to be a low cost golf club which provides membership options affordable to all members of the community. The Club currently has 900 playing members as well as an additional 100 social members who regularly utilise the Club's facilities, restaurant and walking trails.

The Club is also an important source of employment in the local community – employing 20 local Canberrans in administration, catering and course maintenance roles.

Indeed recent research by commissioned by Golf NSW <http://www.golfnsw.org/site/content/document/00040518-source.pdf> has shown that ACT golf clubs collectively provide a community economic benefit to the ACT of over \$45 million pa along with significant social and health benefits.

As with many golf clubs, Murrumbidgee is under continuing financial pressure. The Club's facilities and infrastructure are now nearing 30 years old, and require reinvestment. Over recent years the Club has successfully implemented a number of initiatives to increase revenue and control costs. Despite this, it has only been the availability of the temporary ACT Government rebate on water extraction fees which has allowed the club to break even financially. In recent times, other golf clubs, such as the Gold Creek Country Club and the North Lakes Golf Club in Brisbane have announced plans to close all, or a significant part of their golf courses due to the lack of financial sustainability.

Murrumbidgee needs an ongoing revenue stream to ensure the future survival and development of the Club.

In 2013, with ACT Government support, Murrumbidgee commissioned a feasibility study to identify potential development sites which could generate revenue for the Club. The study identified the potential to develop up to three small sites, two of which are not used in golf course operations and the third of which includes the Club's driving range and cart storage facilities. Collectively, these sites comprise only around 10% of the existing golf club lease.

In early 2018, the Club lodged a Planning Report with the ACT Planning Directorate that applied to rezone these three tracts of land. The Planning Report, informed by a range of expert studies, concluded that the development of the residential zones will not have any significant adverse impact on surrounding land uses or on the local environment. The application was prepared in close consultation with, and informed by feedback from, the local community and members. **As a result**

of this consultation, a number of compromises were made to original recommendations in the feasibility study. Whilst these compromises reduce any potential yield to the Club, they were made in the spirit of ensuring that any future development respects and protects the residential and lifestyle amenity of the local precinct.

The proposed rezoning of a 6.5 hectare site on the south-east portion of the golf club along Learmonth Drive would provide for up to 46 detached single dwelling blocks in the order of 600 m². Height and single storey restrictions will be imposed to protect existing neighbour views. If it proceeds, this will be one of the few developments in Canberra which will meet the needs of 'down sizers' for single level dwellings on modest size blocks. The demand for this type of development is evidenced by the fact that twenty three \$5,000 non refundable options for blocks have been sold by the Club and used to fund the preparation of the rezoning application.

During community consultation, the Club agreed that this development would include parklands and trails for community use. Contrary to some claims which have been made, the block is not currently widely used, and indeed is unsightly and dangerous with a series of crevasses feeding into the water course. This block is literally across the road from the 249 hectare Urambi Hills Nature Reserve – so its development would have little impact on the 'green space' readily available to local residents.

The second site is a block of just under a hectare in size on the corners of Drysdale and Crozier Circuits. The site can accommodate approximately 30 single or two storey townhouses in a style similar to the adjoining Urambi Village. Following consultation with the local community, it has been agreed that any development site would be separated from Urambi Village by way of a 6 metre wide pedestrian pathway and will include permanent access to the rear of the Urambi Village to address present access issues. Heritage walking trails and storm water engineering within the surrounds will not be compromised.

The third site is located on Kambah Pool road and includes the current golf course driving range and cart storage facilities. As such, any development on this site would require consideration of the impact on golfing facilities and is thus likely to be a costly option and one which is dependent on further member approval.

In preparing the Planning Report the Club believes it has consulted in good faith with the local community and, as outlined above, made significant compromises to original concepts in order to come up with a solution which meets the needs of both the golf club and local residents. However, the Club has now been informed by the local Save Our Green Space campaign representatives that they are concerned about the broader ACT wide phenomenon of developing green spaces, that they are opposed to any deconcessionalisation of leases and **that there are no compromises the club could make which would lead them to agree the development proposals.**

Whilst the Club is continuing with the community consultation program, it believes it has submitted a planning proposal which meets the needs of the Club, addresses reasonable concerns of the local residents and will provide benefit to the entire Canberra community. The development proposal is critical to the future viability and sustainability of our golf course. I am asking for your support for the development proposal and Tuggeranong's only golf club.

Yours sincerely

Nancye Burkevics
Member No 633