

**Submission  
No 42**

## **INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESSES IN NSW**

**Organisation:** ACT Government

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**ANDREW BARR** MLA  
**CHIEF MINISTER**

Treasurer  
Minister for Economic Development  
Minister for Urban Renewal  
Minister for Tourism and Events

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Member for Molonglo

The Hon Greg Pearce MLC  
Chair of the Standing Committee on State Development  
NSW Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chair <sup>Greg</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the *Legislative Council Inquiry into regional planning processes in NSW*. The following submission to the Standing Committee on State Development details the role of the ACT as a regional centre for South East NSW and outlines the key achievements and emerging planning issues for the broader Canberra region.

In providing this information, the ACT Government's submission addresses some key terms of reference:

- a) Opportunities to stimulate regional development under the planning framework including through legislation, policy, strategy and governance.
- b) Constraints to regional development imposed by the planning framework and opportunities for the framework to better respond to regional planning issues.
- e) Opportunities for strategic planning to assist in responding to challenges faced by communities in regional areas including through Regional Plans.
- f) Opportunities for government-led incentives that promote regional development.

The ACT's role as a regional centre for South East NSW:

The south east region of NSW is a major growth area of Australia and home to the nation's largest inland city, Canberra. Surrounding the ACT are some of NSW's fastest growing local

government areas (LGAs), forming a region where jurisdictional borders are largely non-existent for residents and visitors alike. Canberra's location at the centre of south east NSW renders it the principal service centre and driver of growth for the wider region (please refer to map at [Attachment A](#)).

Despite the many benefits and opportunities for collaboration this dynamic provides, differing legislative and regulatory frameworks present a range of challenges for government, particularly in relation to the funding government services delivered in a cross-border context and supporting infrastructure. It is widely acknowledged that Canberra is an important service centre for the delivery of health, education, employment, cultural, retail and recreational services to the surrounding NSW community.

The ACT Government uses a number of mechanisms to foster strong and productive engagement with the region, first of which being the ACT-NSW Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Regional Collaboration:

- Signed in 2011, the MoU strengthens the collaboration between the ACT and NSW Governments and serves to optimise regional outcomes by promoting and supporting cross-border service delivery in the South East NSW Region.
- The MoU reflects the desire to pursue a regional approach on a range of economic development opportunities and to provide for integrated service planning in the education and health sectors.
- Negotiations are currently underway between the ACT and NSW Governments to re-sign and reaffirm our continued commitment to the MoU.

Another central pillar in the ACT Government's engagement strategy with the region is our membership of the Canberra Region Joint Organisation (CBRJO). Formed as a partnership between the ACT Government and the 12 surrounding LGAs, the CBRJO seeks to promote the competitive strengths of the region and collectively enhance the economic opportunities available. To date Canberra's engagement with the CBRJO has been extremely positive, and enabled the Territory to:

- Strengthen its relationships with all regional neighbours;
- Advocate for the broader region to the Federal Government;
- Facilitate growth and development opportunities as a broader collective; and
- Pursue economies of scale through collective procurement.

Canberra's engagement with the region is further enhanced by a number of regular, bilateral engagements with surrounding LGAs, in particular Queanbeyan City Council and the Yass Valley Council, reflecting the strong connection between these regional communities and Canberra.

The ACT Government continues to monitor the ongoing local government reforms in NSW and is committed to continuing our engagement with the region, through and beyond this reform process.

Maintaining this relationship is of key importance to the ACT Government and we will continue to advocate strongly for a single joint organisation to promote opportunities for cross-border integrated planning and regional economic development.

a) Opportunities to stimulate regional development under the planning framework including through legislation, policy, strategy and governance.

The ACT Government strongly supports the extensive engagement being conducted by the NSW Government on the NSW South East and Tablelands Regional Plan. We envisage the plan will provide a critical foundation upon which to articulate the benefits of a more integrated approach to regional planning and economic development.

A key opportunity to stimulate regional development is the recent introduction of international flights into Canberra Airport. International flights will facilitate greater tourism and the opportunity for local producers to export products to international markets. For regional freight hubs such as Queanbeyan, Goulburn and Yass, the use of Canberra International Airport has the key advantage of avoiding the congestion and capacity challenges facing Sydney Airport.

Given the growing importance of Canberra to the wider region, the ACT Government is committed to incorporating regional dimensions in its consideration of ACT Government policies and strategies, particularly when addressing spatial planning, transport, environmental management, economic development, tourism activities and service delivery.

b) Constraints to regional development imposed by the planning framework and opportunities for the framework to better respond to regional planning issues.

The ACT Government welcomes the greater recognition of Canberra as the major regional service centre in the NSW Government's policy documents. A constraint on regional development is the existence of two planning regimes operating adjacent to each other, at times presenting a number of planning challenges for the region. A recent example is the development at South Tralee adjacent to the ACT's industrial estate at Hume and in close proximity to the Canberra Airport's flight paths.

Extensive negotiations between the jurisdictions have resulted in a way forward on the development undertaken over an extensive period and at a significant cost. Ensuring the viability of the Canberra Airport as a key piece of regional infrastructure was a primary concern for the ACT Government.

More recent examples of developments occurring in the adjacent local government areas surrounding the ACT include Googong and West Belconnen / Riverview. Each provide necessary housing stock for the growing population, but their proximity to the ACT requires detailed discussions on planning implications for both jurisdictions. A mechanism that facilitates early cross jurisdictional engagement on planning, infrastructure and cost implications is strongly supported.

#### *Case Study 1: Googong*

- Planning for the Googong development began in the early 2000s with approval to begin the re-zoning process granted in 2006.
- Despite an independent Queanbeyan Land Release Inquiry, issued by the NSW Minister for Planning in September 2000, recommending the site as a future residential growth area, re-zoning of the site to allow for a residential development was only approved in December 2009.
- With the final development control plan for the township of Googong approved by Queanbeyan city council in October 2010, civil construction of the development did not commence until 2012, with the first residents moving in during February 2014.

#### *Case Study 2: West Belconnen/Riverview/Parkwood*

- The West Belconnen/Riverview/Parkwood project includes land in both NSW and the ACT.
- For the development to occur, land on both sides of the border needs to be rezoned, a complex process requiring a variation to the Territory Plan in the ACT, an amendment to the National Capital Plan and an amendment to the Yass Valley Local Environment Plan.
- Households located on the NSW side are “landlocked” restricting their ability to access NSW services and engage with state authorities (e.g. motor vehicle registration, licensing, lodgement of development applications etc.).

e) Opportunities for strategic planning to assist in responding to challenges faced by communities in regional areas including through Regional Plans.

#### *Transport Planning*

Developing a strategic and integrated transport plan is crucial to maintaining the region’s connectivity. This includes the sharing of land use planning, growth and land development forecasting to develop integrated transport and land use models. Facilitating this information exchange is critical to meeting public expectations for cost-effective mobility, unimpeded by jurisdictional boundaries.

As the need for road transport links increase, there is a greater requirement for this infrastructure to be improved so that the social and economic activity of the region can be maintained. A bi-partisan approach to transport planning would ensure that:

- Key regional infrastructure priorities are jointly identified;
- Infrastructure development responds to increasing demand for road, rail, air and public transport systems; and
- An equitable model for infrastructure funding can be developed.

#### *Catchment Management and Water Policy*

The ACT and region is located within the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment, an essential water system for the surrounding South East NSW region. Access to potable water is a key determinant for future developments across the region. Icon Water, as manager of the ACT's potable water and sewage network, faces an increasing volume of enquiries about linking into the ACT potable water network.

To address the potential water, environment and planning issues this situation presents the ACT Government, on 20 October 2014, established the *ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group* whose members include the ACT, NSW, local government and community groups. The coordination group acts as an inter-jurisdictional statutory body tasked with the development of a regional catchment strategy.

Currently in draft, the *ACT and Region Catchment strategy* sets out the principles for governance and describes the key factors that will affect the catchment over the next 30 years. The strategy will propose a number of cross-jurisdictional actions that aim to optimise outcomes for the region and emphasise the importance of better alignment across all levels of Government catchment and water policies.

An integrated catchment management approach is necessary to:

- Secure long term water supplies;
  - Improve water quality, reduce pathogen loads and enhance the health of aquatic ecosystems across the ACT and region; and
  - Develop a regional approach to strategic land and biodiversity management practices.
- f) Opportunities for government-led incentives that promote regional development.

The ACT Government perceives its role in the region as supporting regional economic development. Utilising the various engagement mechanisms available under the ACT-NSW Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the CBRJO and the Cross Border Economic

Development Committee, the ACT Government will continue to collaborate with its regional partners to promote opportunities for economic development.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Barr MLA  
Chief Minister

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Attachment A – Map of ACT and surrounding regional centres

