



**ACT**  
Government

# ACT HOUSING CHOICES COLLABORATION HUB GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

SEPTEMBER 2018



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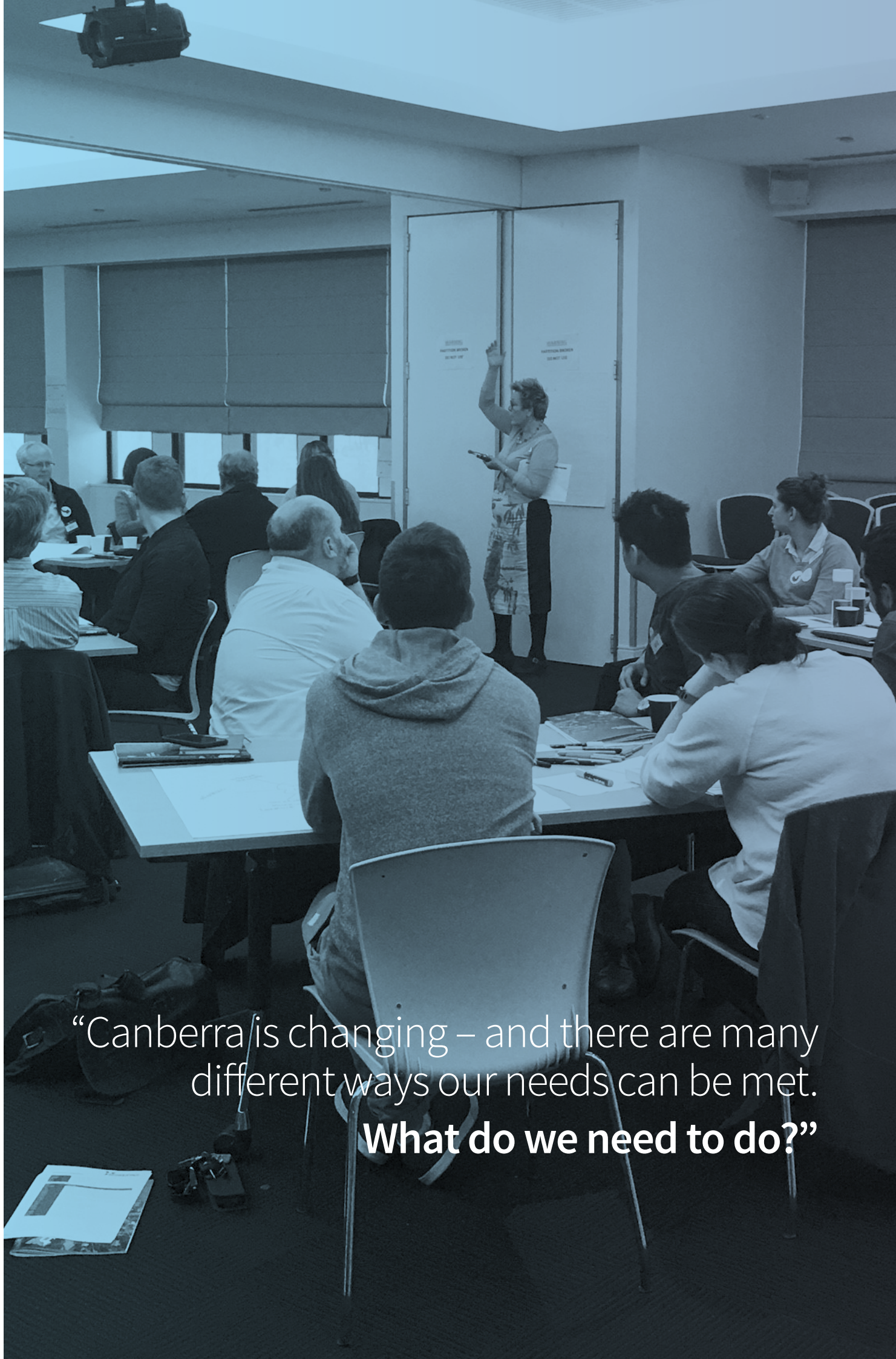


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“Canberra is changing – and there are many different ways our needs can be met.  
**What do we need to do?”**

# MINISTER'S FOREWORD



The final report of the Housing Choices Collaboration Hub is an exciting achievement for local democracy. The report of recommendations was presented to me at the last meeting of the collaboration hub on 28 July 2018. I am delighted to present my initial response to the recommendations.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Collaboration Hub participants for committing their time and effort to the task before them. I am grateful for their contribution and for preparing the report. This was an innovative, exciting and genuine opportunity for the citizens of Canberra to influence the future of housing and planning for our city.

The level of community engagement in this process and the quality of the recommendations from the Collaboration Hub are proof that local democracy can be enhanced through deliberative engagement with citizens.

Since late 2014 I have listened to feedback and ideas on housing choices through a range of methods and processes to establish an understanding of what ACT people value. In the lead up to our Collaboration Hub meetings, research and consultation was undertaken widely on housing choices by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, including on the Housing Choices Discussion Paper earlier this year.

What emerged from the background research and consultation were issues that our citizens told us they value most about housing choices. These issues were summarised in the Housing Choices Discussion Paper Community Engagement Report released in May 2018.

The Collaboration Hub was the next step. Over the duration of five, eight-hour days across three months, the hub participants considered the insights from our research and community engagement, heard from speakers and read public submissions. They deliberated over issues provided through these sources, and through the collaboration hub information kit.

The Collaboration Hub completed its deliberations and presented its report of recommendations to me in response to the question: *"Canberra is changing – and there are many different ways our needs can be met. What do we need to do?"*

A final thank you to the newDemocracy Foundation and expert facilitators from Straight Talk for their professional management and support to the Collaboration Hub. They were key to ensuring this process and the recommendations were independent from government and grounded in genuine deliberative engagement.

I am pleased to present the following response to the Collaboration Hub's recommendations contained in their report. I look forward to implementing these recommendations.

**Mick Gentleman MLA**  
Minister for Planning and Land Management

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Why was the housing choices project undertaken?

The Housing Choices project was undertaken by the ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) to investigate whether the housing needs of the Canberra community are currently being met and how they can be better met in the future. A Housing Choices Discussion Paper released for consultation in November 2017 provided a basis for community comment to inform future planning decisions on improving housing choice.

## How did the community have its say?

The approach to engagement and evidence-based policy development was collaborative, innovative and informed. It was carried out in two stages:

1. education and information
2. collaborative engagement

In stage one, feedback on housing choices was sought from the community and industry – not only the most vocal – through media articles, correspondence and talk-back radio. EPSDD commissioned a social research survey of 1,000 citizens living across the city, and an economic analysis of the housing redevelopment market.

EPSDD released three reports:

- Housing Choices Discussion Paper (November 2017) for consultation from 17 November 2017 to 9 March 2018.
- Housing Choices Discussion Paper Community Engagement Report (May 2018).
- Housing Choices Collaboration Hub Information Kit (April 2018).

These reports informed the second stage of engagement from May to July 2018. This sought further feedback on housing choices from the community, including the Collaboration Hub.





townhouses for family  
 3-4 bed/courtyard  
 3bed. schools/infra/transport  
 maintenance ↑ prefer established  
 for aged. Access/mobility  
 issues / tower not an option.  
 - Governance issues - strategy  
 - Home help only so good.  
 HOUSING  
 apartment car parks  
 too imposed.  
 townhouse/with garden  
 apartments have  
 communal areas  
 low scale cafes  
 Building Act  
 flexible for  
 adaptability  
 more govt. housing  
 4 like high  
 apartments.  
 Affordability for middle age/young  
 people.  
 Leave RZ1 alone and  
 keep choice for bigger  
 blocks where I can have  
 a veggie garden & dogs.  
 Govt revenue  
 influences policy  
 (med-low) incomes = no choice.

## What was the housing choices Collaboration Hub and its process?

The Housing Choices Collaboration Hub was a group of 36 randomly selected individuals that represented a broad cross-section of the Canberra community.

The Collaboration Hub was a deliberative process that brought together these citizens to discuss, deliberate and receive information on housing choices. They considered the desires of stakeholders and best practice thinking to recommend options on ways to improve housing choices.

“I would encourage anyone to be part of this process. It is a way of having your say, getting more information and being more actively involved as a citizen. We vote. This is another way of saying to the government – this is how we’d like to shape our community and where we’d like to see our city head.”

COLLABORATION HUB PARTICIPANT



# Who was on the Collaboration Hub and how was it selected?

The newDemocracy Foundation is a non-partisan, not-for-profit research organisation specialising in deliberative and innovative approaches to democracy. EPSDD commissioned newDemocracy to design, select and oversee the Collaboration Hub independent from government.

The Collaboration Hub meetings were expertly facilitated by Straight Talk, a recognised industry leader in the design and implementation of innovative community engagement.

The newDemocracy Foundation posted invitations to a random sample of 15,000 ACT citizens. This included physical addresses to cover people who own and rent property. Approximately 300 citizens expressed an interest in participating in the collaboration hub. The newDemocracy Foundation used four stratification variables – age, gender, household type (owner occupier or tenant) and locality – to get a representative sample of 36 citizens.

EPSDD officers met the Collaboration Hub participants for the first time at the first meeting on 5 May 2018.

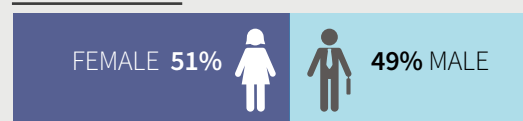
Figure 1 provides an overview of the Collaboration Hub participants in terms of age, gender, household type (owner occupier or tenant) and locality of their residence.

“Whatever we come up with at the end of this process, we’ve been guaranteed that it will go to the Minister unedited. That’s the key for me in thinking this is independent. We are really serious in putting our thoughts forward, and we see the government as being serious in consultation with the community.”

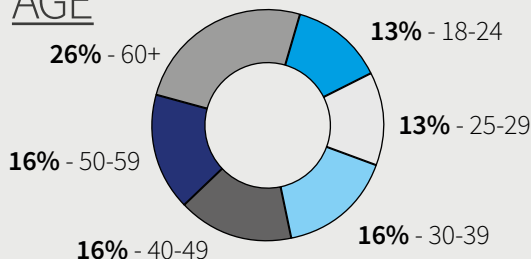
COLLABORATION HUB PARTICIPANT

Figure 1: Key characteristics of the collaboration hub

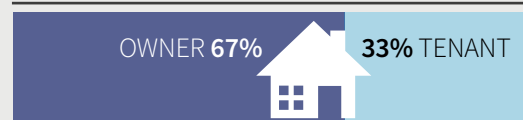
## GENDER



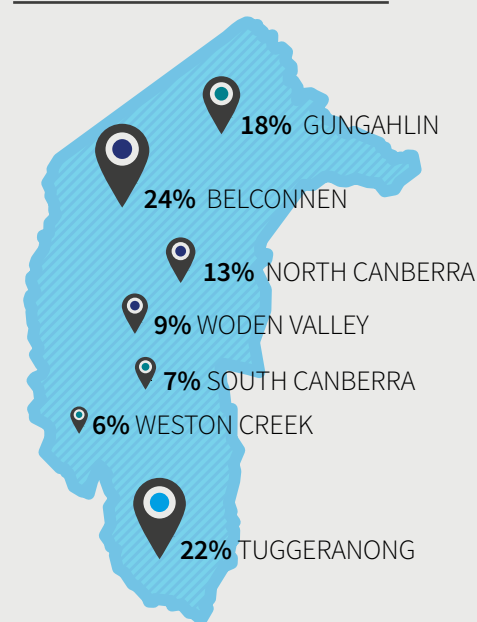
## AGE



## HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP



## DISTRICT LOCALITY



# What was the Collaboration Hub asked to do?

The Collaboration Hub was asked to consider the following question:

“Canberra is changing – and there are many different ways our needs can be met. **What do we need to do?”**

In responding to this question, the Collaboration Hub was required to write a report of recommendations.

The Collaboration Hub had a clear authority from the Minister for Planning and Land Management.

The Minister committed to:

- Attend the first meeting of the Collaboration Hub on 5 May 2018.
- Attend and be presented directly with the unedited report from the Collaboration Hub at its last meeting on 28 July 2018.
- Respond to the recommendations of the Collaboration Hub within 45 days.
- Provide reasons for any recommendations not agreed.
- Report back to the Government on the response.

# How did the Collaboration Hub arrive at its recommendations?

The Collaboration Hub considered a range of materials and deliberated over five meetings to arrive at its recommendations and final report. Collaboration Hub participants “deep-dived” to gather knowledge to inform their recommendations. Refer to Figure 2.

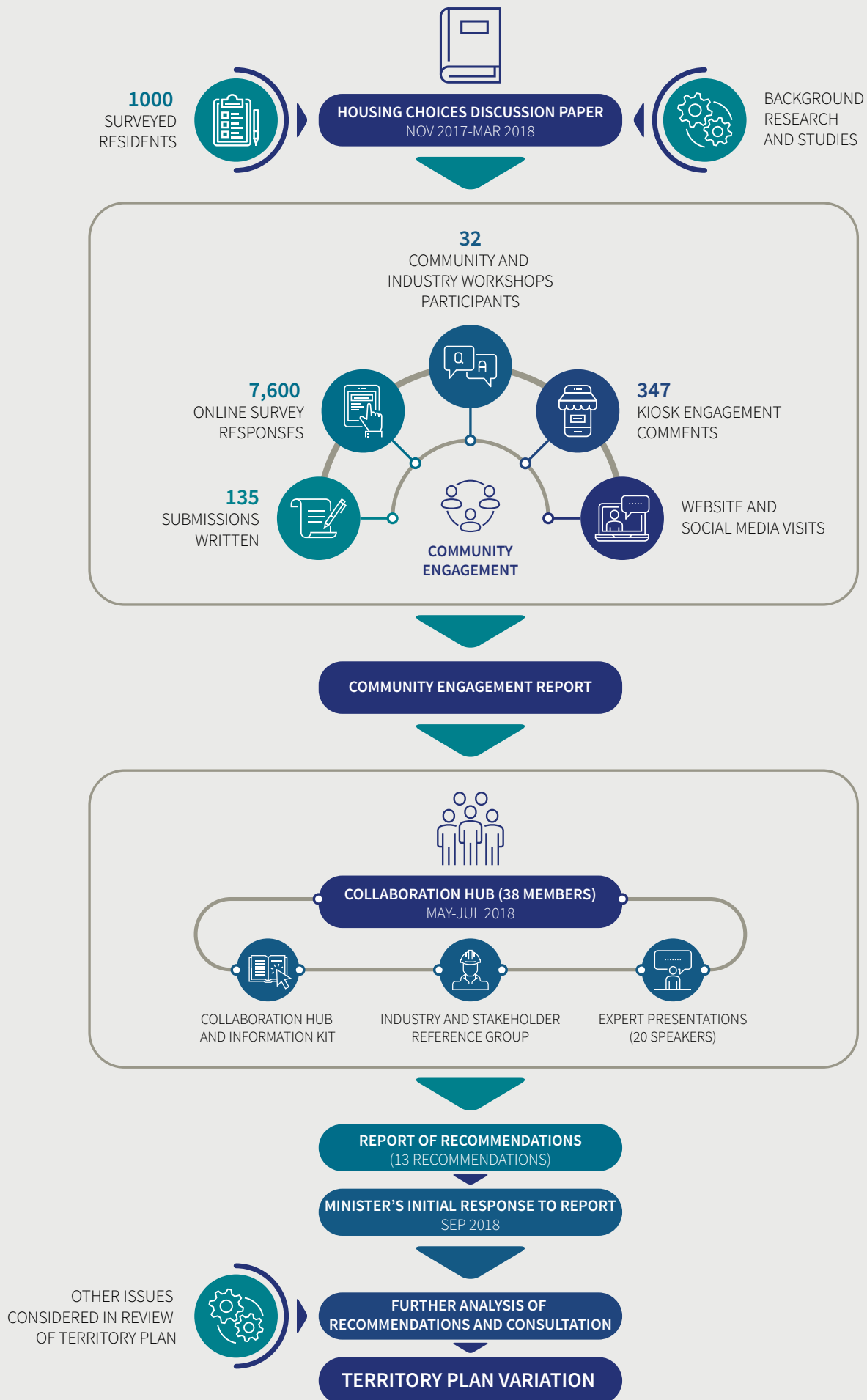
The Collaboration Hub participants:

- attended five eight-hour meetings on Saturdays over three months;
- were provided with the housing choices discussion paper, submissions received, consultation report and information kit;
- requested information;
- requested presenters to attend meetings;
- heard from speakers recommended by the stakeholder reference group to provide for transparent input; and
- communicated and received information via an online forum between meetings.

All of the written materials considered by the Collaboration Hub can be found on the YourSay website: [www.yoursay.act.gov.au/housing-choices](http://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/housing-choices).

The Collaboration Hub participants wrote the recommendations report and provided it directly to the Minister at the last meeting on Saturday 28 July 2018. The report was made publicly available via YourSay on Monday 30 July 2018. Only those participants who attended at least four meetings received a payment of \$500 to cover their time and expenses.

Figure 2: Housing Choices and collaboration Hub process



# Why did we take a different approach with the Collaboration Hub?

Housing choice and diversity requires considered thinking and balanced solutions. This innovative approach of a Collaboration Hub was taken because it involved a broad selection of the community in the process of informed decision-making. This collaborative approach demonstrated fellow citizens have reached a consensus around a decision, which is therefore more likely to reflect the views of the broader community.

The ACT Government has broken new ground with its collaboration hub. No other Canberra citizens have had the opportunity to influence the city's planning and housing policies in this way and to this extent. This was an opportunity for the Collaboration Hub participants to have their voice heard in decisions that will have an impact on the whole community.

“We’re able to look more critically at the information that is available. We can understand what is driving the political party’s ideas. This is a kick-start to staying involved.”

COLLABORATION HUB PARTICIPANT

## What is the relationship of housing choices to demonstration housing?

The Housing Choices project and the Demonstration Housing project are running in parallel. The timing of these two projects presented a valuable opportunity for the Collaboration Hub to interact in a way that informs and complements both processes.

The Collaboration Hub played an important role in the development of the assessment criteria for the Demonstration Housing Stage 2 Request for Proposal (RFP). The Collaboration Hub participants voted on which of the Demonstration Housing Assembly Resolution (15 June 2017) criteria should be given the most weighting.










As well as voting on the Assembly Resolution criteria, the Collaboration Hub conveyed their desire for the RFP to include the key considerations of garden city landscape character and universal design. These considerations have been incorporated into the RFP as particular areas of focus for Demonstration Housing projects.



# SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSE

This response to the Housing Choices Collaboration Hub’s report of recommendations reflects the fulfilment of the commitment made by the Minister for Planning and Land Management.

The response contained in this report is presented against each of the Collaboration Hub report’s 13 recommendations, which are clustered under the following nine themes:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|  <p>1. AFFORDABILITY<br/>Recommendations 1, 2 and 3</p>  |  <p>2. CHARACTER<br/>Recommendation 4</p>              |  <p>3. ENVIRONMENT<br/>Recommendations 5 and 6</p> |
|  <p>4. LIFESTYLE AND DIVERSITY<br/>Recommendation 7</p>  |  <p>5. PLANNING AND APPROVALS<br/>Recommendation 8</p> |  <p>6. PUBLIC HOUSING<br/>Recommendation 9</p>     |
|  <p>7. QUALITY OF CONSTRUCTION<br/>Recommendation 10</p> |  <p>8. QUALITY OF DESIGN<br/>Recommendation 11</p>     |  <p>9. ZONING<br/>Recommendations 12 and 13.</p>   |

Minority reports were made by the Collaboration Hub on two ideas – environment and public housing. These ideas are not recommendations but were provided to assist with informing the Minister as to the 13 recommendations.

Many of the recommendations are consistent with policy work currently being undertaken by the ACT Government, or work soon to commence. Other recommendations, such as allowing dual occupancies to be unit titled in the RZ1 Suburban Zone, will lead to specific work being undertaken to enable the recommendation to be implemented. All of the recommendations will provide valuable input into the future policy work of the ACT Government.



# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Minister for Planning and Land Management has given support in-principle to all of the Housing Choices Collaboration Hub's recommendations contained in its report. That is, the Minister agrees to the ideas proposed in the recommendations, with further detailed work required by EPSDD and other agencies to determine the most appropriate way to deliver the desired outcome.

The discussions of the Collaboration Hub indicated that delivering better outcomes was their key focus, while being clear that any policy changes should not make the situation worse (for instance a change in policy should not result in housing being less affordable). Rather than recommending specific changes to planning rules, the recommendations specified the intent of the policy to be changed and were coupled with their rationale.

The detailed work that will be undertaken will focus on the desired outcomes provided by the Collaboration Hub in their recommendations, as well as the rationale and the background to the themes to determine appropriate policy changes while minimising any unintended consequences.

Recommendations that relate to current projects by the ACT Government will be incorporated into this work and will often affirm the direction being taken and enhance its outcomes. Work will also begin on addressing the recommendations that do not specifically relate to current projects. Some relate specifically to the Housing Choices project and others relate to work on the administration of the ACT planning system, Territory Plan, ACT Planning Strategy, planning approvals, environment, quality of construction and design, affordable housing and public housing.

Some recommendations could translate into changes to the Territory Plan, which would be undertaken by EPSDD. This process would involve further engagement with the Canberra community to discuss proposed changes to planning provisions in the Territory Plan.

Other parts of the ACT Government are responsible for the delivery of public housing, parks and public places, public transport, car parking and other issues related to housing choices. As such, various agencies will share responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations in the long term.

Further information about the Housing Choices project and the Collaboration Hub is available at YourSay: [www.yoursay@act.gov.au/housing-choices](mailto:www.yoursay@act.gov.au/housing-choices).



# DETAILED RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Collaboration Hub developed their recommendations under themes, with each theme including a description or key question that was developed by the group. For each theme, the Collaboration Hub wrote recommendations as well as a rationale, with the themes being listed in alphabetical order. The material presented below includes the themes, recommendation and rationale as written by the Collaboration Hub and provides a response from the ACT Government, as well as the commitment made for each recommendation.

# Theme 1 – Affordability

Housing affordability is affected by land purchase price, availability and location changes and levies, stamp duty, developers buying large / multiple blocks, method of sale / auctions, financial models and bank requirements.

## Recommendation 1

All agreed to ensure the proportion of new land released for lower income earners is maintained.

Many agreed that the proportion of new land released for lower income earners is increased.

## Rationale

To enable lower income households to have affordable housing (from submissions, and presentations including ACTCOSS).

Response: Support in-principle

## Commitments:

The ACT Government agrees it is important to ensure that lower income households have access to affordable housing options as part of releasing new land.

The Government sets targets each year on the land release program for the delivery of affordable homes for purchase by lower income households, public housing and affordable rental housing delivered by community housing providers. In 2018-19, approximately 13% of the residential land released by Government will be dedicated to these targets.

The Government will take into consideration the Collaboration Hub's recommendation for this proportion to be maintained or increased in future, and will respond as part of the development of the new Housing Strategy, to be released later in 2018.





## Recommendation 2

Explore and implement alternative models for affordable home ownership including co-housing, rent-to-buy and financing options.

### Rationale

To enable more low-income people to access affordable housing, examples in public submissions.

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

The ACT Government has launched a \$1 million Affordable Housing Innovation Fund to test new ways of delivering affordable housing options for lower income households.

An Expression of Interest for the first funding round was held earlier in 2018, and one of the categories will trial co-housing models. The Government announced the successful first round applicants on 21 August 2018. Funding will be provided for three affordable housing projects by Community Housing Canberra Incorporated, Environmental Collective Housing Organisation and Smart Urban Villages. This is an opportunity to test innovative, sustainable design with shared use of common spaces or collective ownership models, similar to the Nightingale model.

A second funding round to be held later in 2018, will include a second call for Home Sharing scheme as well as:

- Specialist Disability Accommodation Project
- Supported Housing Projects on Underutilised Community Facility Land
- Dedicated Accommodation for Low Income Families Escaping Domestic Violence
- Other Innovative Approaches to Boosting Affordable Housing Supply.

The Government will take into consideration the Collaboration Hub's recommendation to explore other models for affordable home ownership, including through alternative financing mechanisms, and will respond as part of the development of the new ACT Housing Strategy, to be released later in 2018.

## Recommendation 3

Re-invigorate the land-rent scheme to increase take-up rate for eligible buyers (e.g. review of price level and incentives).

### Rationale

To enable lower income households to have affordable housing (from submissions, and presentations including ACTCOSS).

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

The ACT Government will review ways it could re-invigorate the land-rent scheme to increase the take-up rate for eligible buyers, through discussions with the Suburban Land Agency and Treasury about its policies and program for releasing blocks suitable for land rent.



## Theme 2 – Character

How do we maintain ‘garden city / bush capital’ while meeting changing needs and growing population?

### Recommendation 4

All applications should submit a landscape plan and streetscape elevation to describe character of green space to encourage diversity of street fronts.

It should be enforceable only for multi-unit developments.

### Rationale

The group wants to retain bush capital / garden city feel, and retain each suburb’s unique characteristics.

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

EPSDD will commence a review of the Territory Plan in 2019 which will consider the content and structure of the Territory Plan, as well as the workability of the current planning system. The recommendation to submit a landscape plan and streetscape elevation for multi-unit development will be considered as part of this work, with particular attention to how it relates to recommendation 5 (mandatory soft landscaping areas) and recommendation 8 (creating precinct plans).

A requirement for a landscape plan and streetscape elevation with development applications for multi-unit development will need to be coupled with provisions in the Territory Plan to assess these plans against. The Territory Plan Review can consider how streetscape character and specific characteristics of a suburb can be taken into consideration in the development approval process. Likewise, developing provisions that relate to soft landscaping on a block will guide what would be required and assessed in a landscape plan submitted with a development proposal.

# Theme 3 – Environment

## How do we build / design environmentally houses and communities that minimise environmental footprint?

### Recommendation 5

Require future developments in RZ3 to RZ5 to meet mandatory standards for proportion of soft landscaping plantable area to provide room for shade trees and gardens – to reduce heat island effect and reduce stormwater runoff and integrate planning with government sustainability standards.

### Rationale

To maintain adequate greenspace and landscape for animals and communities to minimise environmental impact.

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

The ACT Government agrees that it is important to maintain greenspace and soft landscaping on blocks, particularly in areas of increased residential density. This recommendation will be actively considered in conjunction with studies that are currently being undertaken by EPSDD to underpin policy work associated with the ACT Planning Strategy Refresh and Climate Change Strategy. In particular, work on green spaces and landscaping within urban areas is incorporating scientific research as well as a review of provisions in other jurisdictions to determine the amount of soft landscaping on a block that will lead to the best outcome in regards to stormwater retention on the site and reducing the heat island effect in suburbs.

### Recommendation 6

Greater preference on 'infill/ brownfield' over 'greenfield'. Particularly along transport corridors. Not at the expense of parks and urban open-space.

### Rationale

To reduce environmental impact with the consideration to appropriately use of brownfield area. (Applicable to zoning).

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

The ACT Government is committed through its planning strategy to a more compact city by focussing urban intensification along major public transport corridors and at commercial centres, balancing where greenfield expansion occurs, and considering planning and design for living infrastructure.

This recommendation affirms one of the key policy directions being explored in the current work on the ACT Planning Strategy Refresh. The need to provide for choice and diversity in where and how people live is being considered in the context of where long term growth in the ACT can occur, to ensure that any further expansion is balanced against the need to protect environmental values and is in locations that support access to employment, services and infrastructure.

This recommendation also reinforces the ACT Government's important strategic planning objective to promote the development of a more sustainable and compact city through increased intensification of residential development. The ACT also has objectives to enhance the provision of living infrastructure to reduce urban heat effects and improve resilience to climate change.

As Canberra grows and evolves to become a compact city with more intensively developed urban areas, the importance of incorporating green space into the city's form and function increases. There is a balance between urban intensification and urban amenity which can be provided by green space and green infrastructure. This is and will continue to be, a key consideration in any policy relating to infill/brownfield development.

# Theme 4 – Lifestyle and diversity

The current housing options driven by market do not provide flexibility for varying lifestyles in both physical space and possible procurement methods.

## Recommendation 7

For both infill\* and new developments, government should require and/or incentivise developers to deliver an increase in:

1. Mix of dwelling sizes and diversity of dwelling types
2. The set proportion (%) of new dwellings that meet universal design standards: whilst taking into account different Precincts and changes over time.

Other NOTES about Infill; this should allow:

- For rules to kick in over time, as spaces/blocks are redeveloped with reference to Precinct Plans
- For the mix and diversity for each area to be reviewed over time; not set and forget.

Notes for Item 1.

As examples for consideration/incorporation:

- Single level age-in places
- Loft-style
- Shop top living
- Courtyard
- Build to rent
- Terrace house
- Share housing
- Mews
- Manor.

Notes for Item 2. Universal design is considered to be an adaptable house that is able to respond to changing lifestyle needs.

## Rationale

Based on submissions/presentations by:

- Kate Auty, ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment
- Sue McGrath, The Benevolent Society
- Clare Wall, Board of Community House Canberra
- Shane Garrett, Housing Industry Association.

Response: Support in-principle

## Commitments:

The need to provide a range of housing options in Canberra was a message that was heard from the community during the consultation on the Housing Choices Discussion Paper. EPSDD will explore options for changing the Territory Plan to increase the mix of dwelling sizes available in residential developments, as well as providing flexibility to deliver a range of housing types. Consideration will also be given to the provisions in the Estate Development Code (applicable to new subdivisions/suburbs) to determine how a greater range of housing types and sizes can be delivered in greenfield areas.

This recommendation and the outcomes of the work outlined above will form the basis of a Territory Plan variation that will be considered by the community in the near future.

In addition to the draft variation, EPSDD will commence a review of the existing Territory Plan in 2019. The review will include investigating best practice statutory planning frameworks that are outcomes focused, and will consider options for a principles/outcomes-based planning system.

The Parliamentary Agreement for the 9th Legislative Assembly for the ACT (22 April 2017) includes items to support the inclusion of universal design features in housing.

The ACT Government is currently participating in the Building Ministers' Forum to investigate a number of matters, including a minimum universal design standard for all new dwellings in the National Construction Code.



## Theme 5 – Planning and approvals

Planning and approvals need to be simplified, controlled and accountable. We need to understand reforms and if there are any gaps.

### Recommendation 8

Create Precinct Plans to provide a framework for planning in and around suburbs and centres.

The Precinct Plan should address future growth, housing, public transport and services at the level of the suburb or centre. It should also manage the cumulative impacts of the development of the urban environment, such as overshadowing; flooding from increased runoff; and wind tunnels.

### Rationale

The precinct plan provides an interface between the parties in the planning process.

It also provides for builders and planners to alleviate or avoid some environmental problems.

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

EPSDD will be undertaking a review of the current Territory Plan. Although the scope and form of the reviewed Territory Plan is still to be determined, this recommendation to create precinct plans will be a key consideration when looking at whether the ACT moves to a more geographic-based planning system. This matter is also being raised in the Planning Strategy Refresh work, in considering the best way to plan for our city and the character of different parts of Canberra.

The role of precinct plans to inform future growth or change in a suburb, including the appropriate location of housing in regards to growing demand and intergenerational needs, will be explored in more detail through this work.

This recommendation will also be referred to Transport Canberra City Services for consideration in their review of the ACT Transport Strategy. The ACT Transport Strategy, which outlines the strategic direction for transport in the ACT, is taken into consideration when rezoning land, particularly for residential development.



## Theme 6 – Public housing

How do we increase public housing stock to include a broader diversity or needs into the future?

### Recommendation 9

Increase in government housing in-line with growth of population, including increase in type of dwellings to reflect the changing demographics.

Types of dwellings to be based on Housing ACT requirements and needs.

### Rationale

There is a shortage in public housing and a growing number of people in need.

The current public housing doesn't provide enough variety in dwelling type (units, 2 bedroom or 3 bedroom houses etc.) to suit the needs of recipients.

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

The ACT Government supports the delivery of a quality public housing service that is capable of responding flexibly to changing tenant needs.

We are committed to growing and renewing our public housing stock and are considering a range of options to support the sustainable growth and realignment of this portfolio to meet the emerging and long term needs of our tenants: current and future.

The ongoing Public Housing Renewal Program is replacing 1,288 low quality public housing dwellings one for one with new purpose designed homes. The replacement dwellings are increasing the diversity of the Housing ACT's housing portfolio to more closely align with the diversity of public housing tenants and their needs.

# Theme 7 – Quality of construction

Construction: meets standards before, during and after construction.

## Recommendation 10

Canberra's housing should be constructed to a high quality throughout all stages. To ensure this, we recommend that the inspection/certification process is completely independent and not influenced by owners, developers or builders.

The group unanimously agreed to this principle. From a construction perspective this can be achieved by ensuring independence in the inspection process including: Greater clarity of standards, frequency of evidence based inspections during the building process, unannounced and frequent auditing of certifiers, solely government appointed certifiers and reviewable records of documentation.

Sources: Community first hand stories (anecdotal) – Chris Millman.

## Rationale

The rationale behind this recommendation is to ensure:

- The elimination of conflicts of interests
- Increased transparency in the inspection process
- Ensuring quality of construction
- Reduction in rectification of building costs

NB: Case in point: Signification number of new flats in the ACT currently with water damage requiring rectification.

Response: Support in-principle

## Commitments:

This recommendation is consistent with the work currently being undertaken by the ACT Government on building construction issues through the Improving the ACT Building Regulatory System reforms.

Current work under the reform program includes developing new codes of practice for builders and building certifiers and documentation guidelines for people preparing and submitting building approval applications.

A new auditing system for both building certification and building work is also in development. There will be increased oversight of practitioners' work throughout the building process. The most appropriate certification and inspections system for the long-term is also being considered.

There is an Inquiry into Building Quality in the ACT underway by the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism. The terms of reference of this inquiry covers many of the issues raised by the Housing Choices Collaboration Hub. The closing date for written submissions is 30 September 2018. The recommendations of this inquiry will be considered by the ACT Government.

# Theme 8 – Quality of design

Design: suits location, zoning, amenities, liveability, inside and out, environment.

## Recommendation 11

We would like the government to adopt a sustainable outcome-based standards of design that demonstrates best practice design quality and liveability standards (e.g. NSW SEP 65 case study).

Includes:

- Promotion of best practice examples in demo projects
- Incentives for solar/renewables, materials, EER, accessibility (e.g. reduction in rates)
- Design review panel mandatory for all applications RZ3-5.

## Rationale

To address the issue of an ACT standard outlining the code of practice governing / covering design quality and liveability.

Response: Support in-principle

## Commitments:

The ACT Government agrees that design quality and liveability are important considerations for ensuring high quality built form outcomes in Canberra. For this reason, design focussed guidelines for residential development (similar to NSW's SEPP 65) are currently being developed for the Northbourne Avenue corridor to deliver best practice design quality along this important part of the city. These design guidelines are proposed to be introduced to the community towards the end of 2018 for consideration as part of the changes to the Territory Plan related to the gateways and Northbourne Avenue. Once implemented along the Northbourne Corridor, consideration will be given to applying the design guidance to other parts of the city.

The Territory Plan Review to be undertaken by EPSDD in 2019 will include investigating best practice statutory planning frameworks that are outcomes focused, and will consider options for a principles/ outcomes-based planning system.

The review of the Territory Plan can also consider the role of the National Capital Design Review Panel, which has been recently established by EPSDD. However it is considered that establishing design controls that will apply to development in the RZ3 to RZ5 residential zones (such as along the Northbourne Corridor) can be a more effective way to address design quality than mandatory referral to a design review panel.

In June 2017, the ACT Legislative Assembly passed a resolution which called on the Government to engage with the community and industry stakeholders on how best to deliver a housing demonstration project that delivers best practice environmental performance, including:

- i. Excellence in design quality;
- ii. Carbon neutral buildings;
- iii. Medium density infill;
- iv. Innovative planning and engagement approaches;
- v. Innovative housing products and typologies;
- vi. Close partnership with industry bodies; and
- vii. Options for public and affordable housing.

To implement this resolution, the Government is delivering the Demonstration Housing project to showcase innovative housing design and delivery options not currently available in the ACT housing market. Demonstration Housing projects will showcase innovative housing design and delivery in Canberra.





By bringing together key actions from my 2015 Statement of Planning Intent, our Housing Innovation Fund and the Parliamentary Agreement, we will test future policy direction using real projects to deliver more innovative, sustainable and affordable housing.

In regards to incentives for building design quality and sustainability, some of the items suggested fall outside of what could reasonably be included in planning documents (i.e. rates reductions, certain building performance standards/incentives and the like). Incentives such as these are better managed through existing mechanisms, such as Lease Variation Charge (LVC) that apply when a lease is changed. The recommendation regarding incentives for EER (energy efficiency rating) and accessibility affirms the work currently being undertaken by EPSDD on design standards related to energy efficiency and accessibility/universal design.

In addition to this work, the Government also runs programs such as the ACTSmart rebate and assistance programs and regulates the Energy Efficiency Improvements Scheme (EEIS). The ACT Smart programs aim to provide assistance to help households, businesses, schools and community groups save energy and water, reduce waste and cut greenhouse gas emissions. The Government has been driving improvements to energy efficiency through the EEIS for residential and non-residential buildings.

## Theme 9 – Zoning

The current zoning system is:

- Inflexible (prevents innovation / suitable design)
- Difficult to understand (where to go, how to navigate, reasons for decisions, increases costs)
- Not responsive (difficult to change).

### Recommendation 12

Many agreed to allow dual occupancy with separate title in RZ1.

With dual-occupancy, some were concerned about small plot sizes and large houses on small blocks of land.

Retain current RZ1 plot ratio for the remainder of that zone.

### Rationale

Allows dual occupancy and retaining a 'garden city' environment.

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

The ACT Government is committed to exploring options for allowing dual occupancies with separate title in the RZ1 Suburban Zone. EPSDD will explore options for how dual occupancies in the RZ1 could be unit titled. Appropriate residential densities and character would be factors taken into consideration, as well as access to services, infrastructure and (public) transport, and appropriate minimum block sizes (after unit titling) and the size of houses on the block.

The outcomes of recommendation 5 regarding soft landscaping on a block will also factor into the provisions limiting/controlling the scale and form of development on a site.

This recommendation will form the basis of a Territory Plan variation that will be considered by the community in the near future.



## Recommendation 13

We don't want lots of tall buildings closely packed next to each other.

With greater density we need greater green space on each block.

### Rationale

Allows RZ2-5 development while retaining the garden city environment.

Response: Support in-principle

### Commitments:

The need to ensure suburbs feel comfortable for residents and visitors and that they are of an appropriate scale is an important consideration when planning residential areas. Buildings that are too tall or too close together for their context can create places that feel overbearing and unpleasant to be in.

The review of the Territory Plan can consider appropriate planning provisions to apply to residential development, particularly where increased densities are permitted and encouraged. These provisions would relate to building setbacks and distances between buildings for multi-unit development to ensure residential areas do not feel crowded and uncomfortable.

This recommendation will also be actively considered in conjunction with studies on green infrastructure that are currently being undertaken by EPSDD in relation to the ACT Planning Strategy Refresh and Climate Change Strategy.

This work is focusing on developing policies to ensure green spaces are provided in urban areas, particularly where residential intensification and greenfield development is proposed. This will help address concerns regarding retaining the garden city environment and providing green space for recreation in higher density areas.





# MINORITY REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

For an idea to become a recommendation, it required an 80% level of support among the Housing Choices Collaboration Hub participants. The following two ideas are minority positions that failed to achieve 80% support from participants. These ideas received at least 10% support, and are included to contribute to informing the Minister as to the 13 recommendations.

## Theme 1 – Environment

### Minority report 1

Ensure that the planning processes for new and redeveloped communities takes into account the preservation of old growth trees and environments that allows for the integration of wildlife corridors linking suburbs through green spaces.

#### Rationale

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While many of the Hub members generally supported protection of the environment this recommendation was not included in the final report due to the significant number of recommendations being put forward and a clear focus on the initial question posed to the group. This recommendation fell short of the required consensus to be included. The original recommendation is provided below with a rationale based on the conversations held over the five working days.

The corridors are valuable in providing natural green spaces for use by citizen and the local wildlife.

This is important to promote biodiversity and protect threatened species and avoid fragmentation and destruction of remnant old growth habitats.

Retaining linked green spaces reflects the Housing Choices Collaboration Hub's strong views on retaining the nature of Canberra being 'The Bush Capital'.



## Theme 2 – Public housing

### Minority report 2

Increase the income threshold from (\$893 gross combined for 2 people) (to whatever the median is so that they pay less than 30% of their gross weekly wages on rent) to allow a wider demographic of people struggling with rental stress to access public housing/community housing.

#### Rationale

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Rental affordability is an acute problem within the ACT. Close to a third of low income households renting are in housing stress (where they must spend more than 30% of their income on rent payment and almost half of low income households in private rental are in housing stress.

Bearing in mind, the average weekly rent within the ACT is \$530 p/w for a 3 bedroom house and \$450 p/w for an apartment.

The original recommendation of an “increase in public housing stock (range of dwelling choice) to suit predicted need, to suit diverse population (including age and financial/ intergenerational factors by % in line with % of population in housing crisis,” had strong support from the group, however, it lost some support due to time when a consensus couldn’t be reached around details of eligibility.



