

Your local voice



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Issues Relating to the “Buffer Zone” between Dixon Drive, Waramanga Drive and the Cotter Road

This Submission is written as a follow-up to discussions and e-mail exchange after the public meeting of the Weston Creek Community Council held on 29 September. These issues were raised with the Land Development Agency representatives and the Director, Roads ACT, at that meeting.

Council was asked to clarify the issues so that a response on these matters could be provided to the Council and the Weston Creek community.

There are two issues that are somewhat related, and all of this really goes back to the Weston Creek area, as it was, prior to the disastrous fires of January 2003.

The first relates to the “buffer zone” between Dixon Drive and Waragamba Drive to the south and Cotter Road to the north. Council has always wanted the whole “buffer zone” to be properly re-afforested.

1. In 2003-04, when consultations about the Canberra Spatial Plan were being held, the Government advised residents/Council that the “buffer zone” would be kept as a buffer without residential housing, and would be developed as a recreation area with new plantings and trails.
2. The community and Council were disappointed that ACT Forests’ attempts in 2004-05 to replant this zone have, in reality, been a failure because so many of the trees planted there died in the severest period of the drought. The community believed that this was due, in the main, to the lack of watering of the fledgling trees. This has been an issue raised with various representatives of both the bureaucracy and Government over the years, from the Chief Minister down.
3. Council and the community have been waiting to see evidence of forest planting to replace the trees that died, and to take account of the alignment of John Gorton Drive, which was only planned after the original re-plantings had occurred.

4. Council also notes that some trees that had managed to grow have now been cut down for the new roadworks of John Gorton Drive, and the only additional improvement undertaken in the area has been the construction of a bike path.
5. All in all, this leaves what the Weston Creek community and Council sees as a tree-less landscape. Everyone would like to see this area return to the pleasant, wooded Weston Creek District fringe area it used to be.
6. The reforestation would also provide a buffer to the residents of Dixon Drive and Waragamba Drive in terms of wind, noise and visual pollution and return the area to that which occurs between all of the other green space areas between the Canberra areas.

The question that remains for Council and the community to ask Government is “What are the plans and timetable for undertaking the landscaping of this whole area that was originally “promised” as a result of the fires in 2003?”

The second point has some crossover with the first but is also a sensitive issue to the Council and the Weston Creek community. Prior to the fires, the entrance to Weston Creek from either the Tuggeranong Parkway and Cotter Road or Coppins Crossing Road was by a drive through a mature forested area which opened almost spectacularly into the lovely valley of Weston Creek. This attractive entrance disappeared with the fires. To aggravate the loss, the development of North Weston and the suburbs of the southern Molonglo Valley will bring a tree-less landscape dominated by housing construction. An environment that will not greatly change for the better until trees have grown, in perhaps ten to fifteen years’ time, but which will, even then, remain a house-scape.

While Council knows that the forest can never be returned to the way it was, Council would like to see a plan to restore the entrance to Weston Creek as one that surprises and delights those entering our valley.

Much has changed in Weston Creek as a consequence of the fires. The development of North Weston and the new district of Molonglo, the enlargement of Stromlo Village and the development of Stromlo Forest Park have brought, and are bringing, a dramatic change to the landscape. Council remains concerned that these significant changes to the environment, particularly for the people of the area adjacent to Dixon and Waragamba Drives, who were most affected by the fires in Weston Creek, are matters that need resolution.

Council would like to know from Government what is planned for landscaping the “buffer zone” and the entrance to Weston Creek. Members would be happy to discuss this further with appropriate officials at any time.

Council looks forward to Government providing a constructive and positive response to our long-held concerns.

Tom Anderson
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