

PRESS RELEASE
DEAKIN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.



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Auditor-General's Report backs residents concerns over planning decisions

The report of the ACT Auditor-General into the handling of residential development applications, tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly this week, confirmed several concerns raised by residents associations about how private building certification powers have been exercised.

Two of the seven case studies in the audit report were related to developments in Deakin.

The report made fourteen recommendations, most importantly responding to the finding that building certifiers had deemed exempt from requiring development approval projects later found to require development approval.

Unjustified exemption allows developments to evade proper public and community scrutiny, and the Auditor-General found that there was no effective sanction for improper granting of such exemptions by certifiers. In the cases studied, the developers had essentially got away with evading due process.

Deakin Residents Association applauds that Minister Corbell has publicly accepted all recommendations on behalf of the Government, and has directed officials to implement necessary changes.

Along with other community organisations across Canberra, DRA has called upon the ACT Government to facilitate and resource better community inclusion in planning issues. Two key elements are:

- More prescriptive local character elements to be included in precinct codes, especially in Canberra's established suburbs, to protect Canberra's garden city character. This should provide more protection to community values in areas such as streetscapes, building setbacks, privacy, and overbearing.
- Establishment of an independent planning advocacy role, accessible to the public, so that individuals trying to navigate the maze of a highly technical planning system can be assisted through the process, including avenues of redress such as the Administrative and Civil Appeals Tribunal.

Community organisations including our own believe that these measures, together with the Auditor-General's recommendations, would offer a better balance between public interest and private interest. Clarity, certainty, and a more streamlined and efficient planning system will benefit all parties including developers and the ACT Government.

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