



ACT planning system governance needs more attention

The GNCA welcomes the recent PEG Consulting Report on governance of the new ACT planning system and urges the government to adopt the eight recommendations to improve governance. The GNCA and other community associations have other suggested changes and look forward to consultation on them.

The new Planning Act came into effect on 27 November last year. The new legislation, however, was subject to an inquiry by the ACT Government Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. The Committee of inquiry called for an independent review of planning governance.

“The constructive proposals in the report include those about separating the Chief Planner role from the head of EPSDD and greater independence and transparency of decision-making across entities.”, said Dr David Denham, President of the GNCA.

The report, however, reflects the lack of input from other stakeholders, including the GNCA and other community groups, who were excluded from the PEG consultations about governance. “The terms of reference for the review allowed only for consultation with the governors – not the governed”, said David Denham.

There was a four-year review of planning leading up to the new legislation but governance was off the table until late in the game. Even so, as early as July 2022, the GNCA recommended separating the Chief Planner role from the D-G of EPSDD during the Legislative Assembly consultations.

Furthermore, in late 2022, the GNCA became aware of another urgent need to stop conflicts of interests in assessing planning and heritage proposals. This came about when the GNCA sought review of a DA affecting a property nominated for heritage listing— it found that the Chief Planner and Head of EPSDD (the home of the heritage unit) is a member of the Heritage Council that advises the planners. The GNCA supports the PEG report discussion on improved heritage protection.

Dr David Denham
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