

Mr Fluffy: ACT Government faces backlash from public over dual occupancy block proposal

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Public submissions have scrutinised the ACT Government's controversial plans to offer dual occupancies on Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos blocks.

The Government received about 90 submissions during its public consultation period, which closed on Monday night, on the proposed planning changes.

The submissions raised concerns over increased housing density, overshadowing and the prospect of building two homes on a smaller block.

The Government wants to amend planning laws to allow most of the affected blocks purchased under the buyback scheme to have the potential to be dual occupancy.

The proposal, made via a Draft Variation to the Territory plan, would help the Government recoup hundreds of millions of dollars in increased land sales.

Currently, dual occupancy is permitted for any blocks of land in the suburban zone, known as RZ1, in ACT that are 800 square metres or larger.

The Government is proposing to change the minimum block size for dual occupancy in the RZ1 zone to 700 square metres for Mr Fluffy-affected blocks only.

The Government also proposed that if a dual occupancy was built, it would permit the owner to have the block unit titled, allowing the two houses to be sold separately.

Community council calls for demolition plan to be scrapped

In its submission, the Inner South Canberra Community Council (ISCCC) called on the ACT Government to scrap its Draft Variation to the Territory plan so that it can be rewritten.

ISCCC chairman Gary Kent said the council was particularly concerned about the impact of block subdivision on neighbours.

"Their land value will fall dramatically if there is a Mr Fluffy block redevelopment next door," he said.

"We estimate that threat could be in the order of \$50,000 to \$100,000. It's a huge devaluation and we don't think that anyone should be subject to that."

Mr Kent said he was also concerned about what he described as the "unplanned nature" of the changes.

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ISCCC chairman Gary Kent

"Many of the Mr Fluffy blocks are in clusters, and we'll find that whole swathes of our urban streets will be essentially diminished in terms of quality and amenity if these changes go through," he said.

"We don't believe that the Government needs to go this far. We appreciate the Government has a very big revenue task in terms of paying for Mr Fluffy, but we believe that there are other ways to find the money."

Mr Kent said it was not necessary for all Mr Fluffy homes to be demolished.

"The Government should take a risk-based approach and there are some houses that

don't need to be demolished," he said.

"That would substantially reduce the cost of the scheme, and then the Government would not then need to make a lot of money by changing the character of our urban suburbs."

Mr Kent said Canberrans valued their garden city.

"And this will irrevocably change the nature of Canberra for short-term financial reasons ... we are very much opposed to that," he said.

ACT Planning directorate Jim Corrigan acknowledged that some people had raised concerns about how the changes would affect the look and feel of Canberra's suburbs.

"There are ... concerns about the cumulative effect of a concentration of loose-fill asbestos blocks," he said.

"There are some parts of some streets in the suburbs affected where there may be several affected blocks in the street, and people have raised what's the potential cumulative effect if they all went to dual occupancies."

In a bid to maintain the amenity of existing streets and suburbs, the Government also proposed multi-storey units and significantly higher density properties would be refused approval if the dwellings were built one behind another on a block.

Dual occupancy gives Mr Fluffy homeowners 'more options'

Mr Corrigan said many concerns were also raised about suburban residents not knowing where the Mr Fluffy-affected blocks were.

About 89 per cent of homes affected by [Mr Fluffy loose fill asbestos are 700 square metres or larger](#).

But he said the proposals were designed to offer Mr Fluffy residents more options.

"The changes are modest enough that it is sympathetic to the suburban character of the RZ1 zone," Mr Corrigan said.

"It's giving people affected by what's occurred with this loose-fill asbestos some options to go ahead.

"It doesn't make it mandatory, but it says, ok if you do ... look at a dual occupancy, these extra provisions are possible."

Mr Corrigan did not concede whether the changes could be exploited by developers.

"The [changes] are only available to loose-fill asbestos-affected blocks," he said.

"There is only a limited number split through the suburbs where Mr Fluffy operated so it is up to the owners of the sites how they proceed and it is only a choice."

The feedback will now be considered by the directorate before any further recommendations are made to the ACT Government.