

27 June 2006

The Chairman  
Queanbeyan Land Release Inquiry  
GPO Box 3415  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir

**Re: Queanbeyan Land Release Inquiry**

On behalf of the Queanbeyan Business Council, Bill Baker and myself, Ian McNamee, wish to make further submissions to the Inquiry, given our organisation's keen interest in the future development of Queanbeyan and its surrounds.

Bill has been in business in Queanbeyan as a lawyer for 35 years and myself as a real estate agent for 43 years. Canberra is the Capital of Australia. Queanbeyan/Canberra the 'Capital' of Southern New South Wales and the area beyond to the Victorian border and Wagga Wagga. Businesses in Wollongong and Nowra are serviced from here.

The Queanbeyan Business Council is a vibrant community organisation, with 170 financial members representing Queanbeyan business, sporting organisations, service clubs and cultural groups. Whilst our organisation has close links with both sides of the political spectrum, having as its patrons the Federal Special Minister of State, Mr Gary Nairn and the local member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, Mr Steve Whan, it is careful not to align itself with any political party. We also liaise closely with the Queanbeyan City Council through its mayor, Mr Frank Pangallo. As such it has a keen and objective interest in the outcome of the Inquiry, which is dealing with the potential rezoning of land commonly known as 'The Poplars', 'Tralee', 'Envirova/Robin Land', 'Googong' and 'Tralee Station'.

By way of historical information The Queanbeyan City Council (QCC) at its meeting on 17 July 2002, resolved to prepare a draft local environmental plan (LEP) to rezone land known as "**Tralee**" for urban and other related purposes. The 1993 and 2004 Structure Plans identified north and south Tralee as potential urban areas.

On 8 April 2005 a completed Local Environment Study and draft LEP were forwarded by the Queanbeyan City Council to the Department of Planning under the provisions of Section 64 of the *Environment and Planning Act, 1979* with a request to issue a Section 65 Certificate to enable public exhibition of the draft plan.

With respect to **Googong**, a formal application for rezoning was preceded by a site investigation to determine whether or not it would be feasible to proceed to a rezoning application. This was undertaken on behalf of Queanbeyan City Council, Yarrowlumla Shire Council and Canberra Investment Corporation, was managed by them, and involved background investigations and considerable consultation with various public authorities and other stakeholders.

Following an application for rezoning and consideration by Council, Queanbeyan City Council on 19 December 2001 advised the then Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources pursuant to Section 54 of the *Environment and Planning Act, 1979* of its intentions to prepare a draft local environment plan (draft Amendment No. 33) applying to land known as Googong.

The assessment of the Googong study area indicates that the land is capable of supporting urban development. Appropriate controls on future development will ensure any potential environmental impacts are minimized.

On 22 December 2005 Queanbeyan City Council requested that the NSW Department of Planning issue a Section 65 Certificate under the provisions of the *Environment and Planning Act, 1979*. In response, on 5 January 2006 the Department of Planning responded that it was unable to issue a Section 65 Certificate until an independent review considered cross border water and settlement agreements.

With regard to **The Poplars**, the rezoning of the land has a long history. The Queanbeyan City Council first drafted an LEP in December 1990. After careful consideration of a further application, Queanbeyan City Council resolved in December 2001 to prepare a draft local environmental plan.

Extensive investigations and public hearings were conducted using an independent Chairman in 1995. The key issues relating to the proposed development included the impact of aircraft noise on residents, future operations of the Canberra Airport and the provision of services and flora and fauna. These issues were addressed in the Planning Report prepared by Lean and Hayward Pty Ltd 2004 in consultation with the City Council.

Being a contributor to The Poplars hearing in May 1995 it was interesting to revisit the extent of Queanbeyan's residential development at that stage. Aerial photographs taken then when compared with contemporary photographs quite clearly show the extent of infill that has occurred. The Poplars is obviously an area as you can see from these photographs that is ready for immediate development. A range of environmental issues have been dealt with, and opposite the Poplars is approximately 80 hectares known as Letchworth Nature Reserve.

In January 2005 the Queanbeyan City Council requested a Section 65 Certificate from the Department of Planning on the understanding that all planning matters had been adequately addressed. A Section 65 Certificate has not been issued.

With regard to **Environa** and the **Robin land**, on 16 July 2003 Queanbeyan City Council resolved to undertake Local Environmental Studies and to prepare a draft LEP to rezone the land for residential use.

You will see from the above that with the exception of Tralee Station, all of the above parcels of land have been the subject of careful consideration and debate by the Queanbeyan City Council and its Planning Officers. The Council along with the population of this city has for a long time been acutely aware of the shortage of residential land within the city boundaries. All of us have been waiting anxiously for many years for the land which is now before the Inquiry to be rezoned. All proposals have had the full support of the City Council, the residents and businesses of Queanbeyan. To put it mildly, it is disappointing to see that the rezoning process has languished for so many years with the NSW Department of Planning. This seems to be a failure of the democratic process given the community at large and its elected representatives have been sidelined by the bureaucracy.

We note that in recent times the issue of a reliable water supply for these new developments has been a sticking point. It appears to our organization that the ACT Government's position on this has been to protect its own commercial interests as a land developer, rather than adhering to the spirit of the original arrangements, whereby it guaranteed future water supplies to the City of Queanbeyan. We suspect the ACT Government sees one new residential block in Queanbeyan as one less in Canberra. Given that a Memorandum of Understanding has now been signed between the ACT and NSW Governments, water should no longer be an issue in terms of the committee's deliberation. As to the capacity of the ACT to provide water to new Queanbeyan areas, ACTEW's Future Water Options study of 2005 concluded that there existed sufficient water to service a regional population well in excess of the 500,000 forecast as the region's maximum. In addition we note that modern water usage options proposed by the owners of these proposed developments will achieve water efficiencies far in excess of traditional subdivision design. Overall growth in the region will occur regardless, however such growth will occur in a much more water efficient manner within the new development areas of Queanbeyan. As such, we submit to the Inquiry that water is no longer a sticking point.

The continued delay in dealing with rezoning of these parcels of land has resulted in a land shortage leading to a significant upturn in land prices, making affordability a real issue for first home buyers.

The committee will no doubt appreciate that Queanbeyan is a growing city where major construction projects are about to commence. These include a new State office block and a new hospital. In addition, the new Defence Headquarters are being built between Queanbeyan and Bungendore, employing an additional 700 people. These developments will place significant strains on Queanbeyan so far as housing is concerned. It is imperative that the rezoning occur as quickly as possible.

Strategically, growth in Queanbeyan will provide an enhanced rate base providing more funds for the provision of services to residents, and Queanbeyan to maintain its position as both an employment and population centre in the National Capital Region, as well as being the NSW anchor of the Sydney to Canberra corridor.

The rezoning of these areas of land is absolutely essential for the continued growth of Queanbeyan, and to ensure affordability of housing. The city has a growth rate of around 3% per annum, which is significantly higher than Canberra. The reason for this is because Queanbeyan is to many regarded as a more desirable place to live than the newer outlying areas of the ACT. As mentioned previously Queanbeyan is experiencing a land shortage and in fact has a requirement for around **300 to 420 residential sites per annum** based on previous years' activity. This obviously will increase as the region continues to grow and with other developments taking place.

During the past 3 financial years Queanbeyan has recorded property transfers as follows:

2003 – 2004	1586
2004 – 2005	1205
2005 – 2006	1014

These figures further demonstrate the demand for more land releases.

We realise that there are many submissions to this enquiry including one regarding aircraft noise an issue which needs obvious consideration. Over the years members have canvassed the views of both new and long term residents of Queanbeyan. Those people contacted purchased with the knowledge of the flight paths as they did in relation to road reserves and other planning issues. Many areas of Queanbeyan are subject to "Flight paths" including me, however the consistent view is 'yes they can be seen and heard, however do not cause any impediment to lifestyle'.

Most people in the region hear the early morning flights out of Canberra, some as far as 35km's away. Air traffic will not impede Queanbeyan's future development and the lifestyle of our residents particularly now with new construction techniques and innovative design, ensuring improvements in privacy and noise mitigation. Whilst appreciating the current economic benefits of Canberra airport to restrict the hours of operations as in Sydney and other world cities, will further reduce the impact on residential areas.

The Business Council firmly supports the rezoning of all the areas in our report. It is clearly in the best interests of Queanbeyan for that to occur without further delay. We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and address the committee.

Yours faithfully

Ian McNamee  
President

Bill Baker  
Vice President