

Yvette Berry MLA

Deputy Chief Minister



Member for Ginninderra

Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development
Minister for Housing and Suburban Development
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
Minister for Women
Minister for Sport and Recreation

17/22501

Mr John Fitzgerald
Chair
Suburban Land Agency

Dear Mr Fitzgerald

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Chair of the Suburban Land Agency Board.

This letter outlines the Government's performance expectations for the Suburban Land Agency (the Agency) in discharging its responsibilities under the *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017* (the Act).

The current Administrative Arrangements assign me, as Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, responsibility for all functions of the Agency in relation to the delivery of greenfield estates.

The government has reinforced the independence of the Agency through legislative arrangements. We have also established a framework to meet the high standards of oversight and accountability the Canberra community rightfully expects of the elected government. Accordingly, as Minister I am providing a written direction to you about the government's expectations of the Agency, in line with the provisions of the Act.

It is in this capacity that I now write to provide clarity on the role of the Agency, Government policies and objectives relevant to its activities, and the overarching principles of accountability, transparency and participation which should underpin its activities.

In outlining my expectations, I have not repeated the specific project priorities which are set out in the 2017-18 ACT Budget and which will be addressed by the reporting required of the Agency by both the *Financial Management Act 1996* and the *Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act 2004*. I have also not repeated the range of objectives and functions as they are outlined in the Act, namely around affordability, social inclusion, housing choice and environmental sustainability as I believe these are clearly stated.

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Objectives and purpose – the Agency and its governing board

The Agency has been established as the ACT Government vehicle for delivering greenfield development and encouraging and promoting urban renewal outside the defined precinct of the City Renewal Authority. I see it delivering for the people of Canberra a program of land development and suburban growth that builds inclusive communities to benefit all Canberrans.

This vision is reflected in the statutory objectives that underpin the Agency's creation.

Government policies and objectives

It is essential that as we shape our city and suburbs for the future, we are doing this with a people-focused perspective, founded on principles of good design and place making. New suburbs should be delivered in a way that will stand the test of time for members of the community, and for our city as a whole. The built form needs to promote connected and innovative communities that deliver the vibrancy, lifestyles, and healthy environments that people want. In doing this, the government has also committed to prioritising affordability and innovative housing as key to enabling great outcomes for diversity of needs and preferences people have.

The Government is currently part way through a program of community engagement that will lead to the development of a new ACT housing strategy. Whilst I acknowledge this strategy covers issues more broadly across government, the delivery of key parts of it will be fundamental to the Agency's work, and how government delivers suburbs into the future.

The Government is pursuing a strong, one government agenda. This agenda recognises that Canberrans do not live their lives according to how government directorates and agencies are structured. Instead, it is up to Government to join up the experiences and services delivered by different entities to improve outcomes for the whole community and ensure Canberra continues to remain one of the most liveable cities in the world.

The Government's commitment to whole of government policies is reflected in the Act. This commitment requires therefore that the Agency's operations be considered in the context of the following policies:

- *ACT Government Statement of Ambition*
- *Canberra's International Engagement Strategy*
- *ACT Government Infrastructure Plan 2011-2021*
- *ACT Planning Strategy 2012* and any outcomes from potential future reviews
- *Transport Canberra: Public Transport Improvement Plan 2015*
- *Transport for Canberra: Transport for a sustainable city 2012-2031*
- *ACT Affordable Housing Action Plan*
- *People, Place and Prosperity: A Policy for Sustainability in the ACT*
- *ACT Waste Management Strategy 2011-2025: Towards a Sustainable Canberra*
- *AP2 – The ACT Climate Change Strategy 2007-2025*
- *The ACT Water Strategy – striking the balance 2014-2044*
- *Statement of Planning Intent – 2015*

Performance characterised by accountability, transparency and participation

Accountability and transparency

Establishing the Agency provides an opportunity to build greater confidence in robust and transparent decision-making for Government land development in the ACT. I expect the Agency's decision making to be well reasoned and justified, as well as recorded appropriately. Specifically, decisions should be underpinned by information management practices that:

- actively promote the timely publication of information consistent with the *ACT Government Digital Strategy* and the *ACT Government Open Data Policy*, and in particular, information that can assist to inform the community's understanding of the role, functions and responsibilities of the Board and the Agency CEO;
- consider the regular public release of board papers or reports to inform, build community understanding and confidence in the operations of the Agency;
- enable clear and timely reporting on performance across both financial and non-financial objectives and indicators; and
- satisfy the records management responsibilities enshrined in the *Territory Records Act*, as reflected in the *ACT Territory Records Office Standards and Guidelines for Records, Information and Data*.
- enable the Agency to work with the Directorate to continue to build on the governance program.

No surprises – timely, accurate and coordinated advice to Government

I ask that the Agency support me, as the responsible minister, through accurate and timely advice on significant issues as they arise, or are being managed by the Agency. These might include but are not limited to:

- matters for which the Government is or is likely to be accountable in the Legislative Assembly;
- matters scheduled for deliberation by the board and by the Ginninderry Joint Venture board;
- important operational or budgetary issues, including responsibilities under the WHS Act;
- achievement against set development targets;
- matters related to internal governance, including compliance with the Government's framework for management of risk; and
- matters likely to attract significant public interest.

I also expect the Agency to build a strong working relationship with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (the Directorate). Responsibilities of the Directorate are broad and include advising Government on matters relating to strategic planning, environmental sustainability, built form and land development and management.

To support the working relationship I ask that the Board:

- ensures arrangements are in place to enable effective and timely information sharing between the Agency and the Directorate, and in turn, high quality advice to my office and the Government; and
- works openly and collaboratively with the Directorate to ensure the Agency's governance, financial and non-financial performance and oversight advice provided is sound and can be used to inform and strengthen the Agency's operations.

Building a positive culture of continuous improvement

An effective governance framework relies on the strength of its internal business champions and the organisational commitment to continuous disclosure and improvement. It is the behaviour of the entity, and the individuals in it, that will make the biggest difference in ensuring the proper accountability of the Agency for its stewardship of the public's suburban land assets.

I look forward to receiving regular updates on the initiatives that are deployed across the Agency to establish and embed a positive organisational culture founded on the ACT Public Service values of Respect, Integrity, Collaboration and Innovation.

Gender equality and diversity

Diversity and equity in the workplace, particularly in relation to gender, is very important to the ACT Government and to me as the Minister for Women. One of my key priorities outlined at the beginning of this term of government, is to improve the economic status, social inclusion, safety, health and wellbeing of ACT women. I would ask that you work with the Head of Service to implement appropriate gender and diversity policies to ensure the Agency is delivering real outcomes in this area.

Stakeholder and community engagement and participation

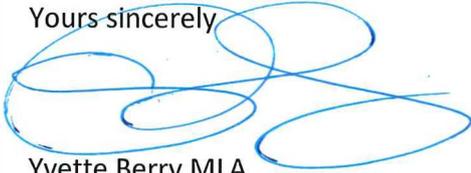
The Government has expressed its commitment to ensuring more comprehensive and genuine engagement with the community – residents, workers, developers and visitors – to ensure their voices are heard and included in how we develop Canberra and its new suburbs.. I would welcome advice from the Agency on ideas it has to ensure developments can be delivered in a way that meaningfully and genuinely engages our community, trusts their views and ideas, and ultimately enhances the attractiveness and liveability of our city.

I also expect the Agency maintain a commitment to:

- the principles of 'Open Government' (through ongoing engagement with the community);
- innovative and sustainable affordable and community housing outcomes; and
- engagement activities such as the "Mingle Program" begun by the Land Development Agency across new suburban estates, including those for which development works have begun and are moving forward to completion.

I look forward to receiving your response, through the statement of intent process provided for under the *Financial Management Act 1996*, outlining how the Board proposes to deliver on these expectations. The breadth and depth of professional expertise held by you and your fellow board members provides the Government with confidence in the Agency's ability to deliver against these expectations for the benefit of the Canberra community.

Yours sincerely



Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Housing and Suburban Development

25 August 2017