

# 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

Mr John Fitzgerald  
Chair  
Suburban Land Agency

Dear Mr Fitzgerald

Congratulations on successfully guiding the operations of the newly established Suburban Land Agency for the first nine months since its establishment.

This letter seeks to reaffirm the Government's expectations of the Suburban Land Agency as set out in my letter to you of 25 August 2017, in discharging its responsibilities under the *City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017* (the Act).

As the inaugural statement of expectations articulated, the government is keen to ensure that the framework that was established to meet the high standards of oversight and accountability that the Canberra community expects of the elected government, continue to be firmly embedded in your operations going forward.

In reiterating these expectations, I again ask that the Agency maintain a commitment to the principles of good governance, accountability and transparency, to 'Open Government' principles, innovative and sustainable affordable and community housing outcomes; and continual contemporary engagement practices across our community.

Specifically, information management practices should include:

- The timely publication of information consistent with the ACT Government Digital Strategy, ACT Government Open Data Policy, and the Open Access Information Scheme contained in the *Freedom of Information Act 2016*, particularly information that can assist to inform the community's understanding of the role, functions and responsibilities of the Board and the 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;

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- Satisfy the records management responsibilities enshrined in the *Territory Records Act 2002*, as reflected in the ACT Territory Records Office *Standards and Guidelines for Records, Information and Data*; and
- Enable the Agency to continue to operationalise better practice governance initiatives, practices and activities.

In addition to the important issues outlined in my letter of August 2017, I am now identifying additional priorities, some of which may have already been commenced for action.

### **Future Greenfield land development**

In preparing for future residential expansion across the ACT and considering the finite greenfield land available, the government has an important piece of work to finalise to ensure it is ready and able to plan for the future needs of the city. Given the range of strategic land acquired along the western edge of the ACT, this is a likely area for further study. In acknowledging that this work requires extensive investigation and study to be development-ready, it is important that all areas of government are working together to be ready for the next tranche. The ACT Planning strategy released in 2012 acknowledges that most remaining urban capable land presents significant challenges because of its location, terrain and environmental sensitivities and it is therefore important that the government's approach is clear and agreed. I note that the ACT Government is currently undertaking work to refresh the planning strategy and the Agency should ensure that its expertise is made available as this work develops.

### **Supporting diversity in senior SLA positions**

The government has committed to driving true gender equality in Canberra, across all spheres where it has an influence and the Agency has capacity to be a leader in this area. I want to ensure that the Agency has, or will develop a diversity strategy, in particular to ensure you are attracting, supporting and retaining women, including in senior positions. Such a strategy should also consider training programs to address issues such as unconscious bias. The Office for Women will be happy to work with your team to develop options for the future to ensure you are offering the same standards that are expected across government, and across contemporary workplaces to drive real change.

### **Community building for Canberra**

The work of the Mingle program seeks to build communities from the ground up and as Minister, I regularly receive positive feedback about this important program. What Mingle does for new communities is delivered in parallel to the work that government seeks to do for established communities. This is particularly important for the public housing renewal program where government is relocating many public housing tenants to new, but often already established communities. These relocations present life changing opportunities for some tenants, and where we have worked with the existing, new community before or during the relocation process, we have seen the best outcomes. I would like the Agency to consider new partnerships and provide learnings to other areas in government as they seek to reinvigorate and strengthen the connections in existing communities.

## **Housing strategy**

The government has identified an ambitious set of goals to improve access to housing for the Canberra community through the development of the Housing Strategy. This work will encompass new opportunities for reducing homelessness, strengthening social housing assistance, increasing affordable rental housing, and increasing affordable home ownership. The Agency will need to be involved as an important player in this policy work as it proceeds.

I look forward to receiving the 2018/19 Statement of Intent from the Suburban Land Agency.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned above the typed name.

Yvette Berry MLA  
Minister for Housing and  
Suburban Development

**19 APR 2018**

