

# **DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH**

## **Private Members Business**

**Thursday 11 February 2021**

### **Motion to establish the Molonglo Valley Community Council**

**Colleagues and members of the ACTs Tenth Legislative Assembly, I give notice to move that this Assembly call on the ACT Government to support the establishment of a Molonglo Valley Community Council.**

As the ACTs newest greenfield development – gazetted in 2010 – the Molonglo Valley area has diverse needs as it continues to develop and grow.

The Molonglo Valley currently has a population approaching 10,000 people, with projections to expand to 50,000 people over the coming years. As the neighbourhoods start to settle as residents move in, what is striking is the youthfulness and ethnic diversity of these suburbs. Although the previous 2016 Census would not be entirely accurate in the picture it creates today, it definitely provides an insight. What we see from 2016 is that the population of Molonglo Valley is on average between 25-44 years old, most have above a Year 12 level education, work full-time, many residents have young children and a significant proportion of population were born overseas.

I do not currently live in the Molonglo Valley, but I did for a very pivotal time in my life from 2017-2018. I was establishing a new chapter of my life for myself and children and Molonglo Valley provided a location of healing and growth for me personally. The townhouse I was renting was a stones throw away from Stromlo Forrest Park, providing every bit of the ‘bush capital’ city living experience that you could dream. The sense of community was new and developing, and was not met without challenges. Everyone is more than aware of the ongoing situation with the Coombs shops, which will be overcome with fast-tracked developments providing much needed shops.

But personally, the feeling that really struck me from living in Molonglo was the sense of excitement for the future of the area and the will of the residents to develop connections and develop a sense of community.

The ACT Government's Suburban Land Agency has led the Mingle program over the past few years in Wright and Coombs. Mingle is a community development program designed to identify community needs, and build connected and sustainable communities within the new estates in the ACT. The Mingle program is finishing up in those suburbs, and will begin work in Whitlam.

As the population of Molonglo has grown and issues have arisen, residents have increasingly engaged informally through the Weston Creek Community Council, informal community groups and Facebook pages.

In recent months, members of the Molonglo Valley community have established their own 'Molonglo Valley Community Forum'. This group has been formed to advocate for the interests and needs of the local community.

The group's stated purpose is to "preserve and improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Molonglo Valley and its community".

Members of this group have, more recently, sought guidance from the ACT Government to become formally recognised as a Community Council for the Molonglo Valley.

Eligibility to become a Community Council requires that the organisation is an incorporated body under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1991*.

The ACT Community Councils incorporated under this Act are established as non-political, not-for-profit organisations, representing a broad range of interests and needs of the local communities with which they engage.

There are currently seven Community Councils operating across the ACT, including Weston Creek, Woden Valley, Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Gungahlin, Inner South and North Canberra. The ACT Government provides financial and in-kind support to the existing seven Community Councils across the ACT.

I am calling on the Government to move this motion in recognition of the fact that residents in the Molonglo Valley face issues that are unique and it is important that there is a forum to bring people together.

Further, it is important that the group is incorporated to cement the community development work that has occurred to date and promote avenues for residents to connect, receive information, discuss relevant issues and advocate to the ACT Government.

Following recognition as a Community Council, the group will be eligible for future Community Council funding through the annual Deed of Grant process.

Through this motion, I suggest that it be included in the remit of the proposed Molonglo Valley Community Council that it is the requirement to engage with the community and advocate to the ACT Government on local issues relevant to the livelihood, liveability and wellbeing of residents and the community.

Given the unique demographic attributes of the newly established suburbs, it is imperative that the Molonglo Valley Community Council is reflective and inclusive of the diversity of the community. This will require thinking outside the box and exploring innovative community engagement methods to establish a council that engages younger stakeholders, and those from non-english speaking backgrounds as an example.

This proposed Molonglo Valley Community Council provides exciting opportunity to build partnerships between residents and the ACT Government to achieve the best outcomes for the community.

**Members of the Assembly – I move that this Assembly call on the ACT Government to support the establishment of a Molonglo Valley Community Council to: a) engage with and advocate to the ACT Government on a broad range of issues and reflect the needs of the local community; and b) ensure the group’s membership is reflective and inclusive of the area’s broad**

**population and demography by exploring innovative community engagement methods.**

**Thank you..**

**Ends**