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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Borrowdale House Redevelopment Threatens Woden Town Square**

Woden Valley Community Council (WVCC) has expressed its deep concern at the ACT Government's recent decision to approve the construction of three new residential and commercial towers (24, 20 and 14 storeys respectively) on the site of Borrowdale House on the western side of Woden Town Square.

The Council has objected to the inappropriate size of the development, the inadequacy of public consultation, and the effect the development will have on neighbouring community facilities and on users of the Town Square. Immediately adjacent to the 22-storey Lovett Tower, the development will overshadow the Town Square and health centre at critical times in winter and will increase wind velocity through the Town Square.

WVCC President, Dr Jenny Stewart, said 'The Council was so concerned with the negative impact of the development on the public spaces in the town centre that I wrote to Planning Minister Andrew Barr MLA, seeking his assistance to "Call in" and refuse the development. Mr Barr replied that he did not consider that refusing the development would provide any public benefit'.

Dr Stewart said the Minister's attitude was particularly concerning as there was a clear impact on public amenity as evidenced in the development application. 'Those people who have worked in the Woden offices will know that Woden Town Square is notorious for the wind tunnel caused by Lovett Tower. The wind studies submitted with the development application show that there would be an increase in this wind caused by the new tower building. The consultants recommended that trees with non-deciduous leaves be planted to ameliorate this effect. Even so, the criterion for effectiveness was that the Square would remain comfortable for walking across but not for sitting'. Dr Stewart said as a minimum, the Council had sought to have permanent structures to ameliorate the wind impact, as there is no guarantee that trees will grow to the necessary height or that they will remain permanent.

WVCC believes that the development is inconsistent with the original planning concepts for the Woden town centre. The Town Square was planned to have solar access from the east, north and west. Canberra is a sub-alpine city and full solar access for at least nine months of the year is

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required for comfortable use of public open spaces. This is particularly so for the Town Square which has considerable daytime use.

In the past the Town Square has hosted a Woden festival but the proposed Borrowdale towers will preclude use of the Town Square from festivities that might normally be associated with a town square. When the current Lovett Tower was constructed it was located to the south west of the Square to minimise impact on the amenity of the square.

Dr Stewart said as the legislation specifically prevents third party appeals to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal on development approvals in the Woden Town Centre, there was no alternative but to request the Minister's assistance. She said the people of Woden were being short changed by the ACT Government, which refused to gazette the Woden Town Centre Master Plan. Dr Stewart added that 'There are currently no height limits in the Territory Plan for the Woden Town Centre and the Centre was fast becoming "Tower Town" without any specific planning framework. It is open slather for towers in Woden'.

WVCC calls on the Government to urgently address the issue of height limits in the Woden Town Centre to prevent any more negative long-term developments from this ad hoc style of development.

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