

ACTPLA declines TCC offer

By Darryl Johnston

■ PRESIDENT

A RECENT public meeting hosted by the Tuggeranong Community Council (TCC) produced more than was expected.

The meeting was held on August 12 and called at the request of the Land Development Agency (LDA) and the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA).

The LDA has since written to the TCC formally expressing its appreciation at being allowed to address the meeting and says it is looking forward to further discussions with the TCC.

On the other hand, and unfortunately, ACTPLA have alleged in the media that TCC members were responsible for rude and intimidating behaviour towards its staff.

TCC first became aware of these allegations through the media.

Following the allegations I canvassed many people who attended the meeting, including the TCC vice president who chaired the meeting, Liberal MLA Brendan Smyth, a journalist and various TCC members.

They say they did not witness any rude or unacceptable behaviour at the meeting.

However, they do say that several questions were firm, but not rude, and came from well informed members of the audience.

The TCC has offered to assist the ACTPLA management in identifying the person or persons responsible for any unacceptable behaviour towards its staff through photographs and video taken at the meeting.

ACTPLA has declined our offer.

As a result, some of our members are concerned that the community is left with a negative impression of the TCC in circumstances where TCC has not had an opportunity to clarify or correct the allegations against it.

The TCC does not condone unacceptable behaviour at any of its general or public meetings.

All TCC members are bound by a code of conduct that is enforced at all council meetings.

TCC visitors and guests are also asked to observe this code.

The TCC believes that any incident which took place may have occurred at the conclusion of the meeting and

may have involved a visitor or visitors, not a TCC member. While the TCC is able to take action against one of its members for unacceptable behaviour it is limited in the action it can take against a visitor.

Nevertheless, it unreservedly apologises to ACTPLA staff who believe they were subjected to unacceptable behaviour.

TCC has subsequently received correspondence from ACTPLA that it is seeking the support of all community councils to introduce strict protocols and controls on the conduct of future general and public meetings at which its staff are invited to address.

These protocols and controls include much of what is already stated in the TCC Code of Conduct.

ACTPLA also wants to proscribe that no questions will be asked and that there be no interruptions during presentations, and that there be no questions on unrelated planning matters.

They also want meetings shut down if the protocols and controls are not observed.

TCC believes members of the public should be able to seek clarification during presentations, voice their opinions and concerns without fear of being silenced and community meetings should not be shut down if the questions get tough.

The TCC believes public servants addressing community meetings must be fully prepared and able to deal positively with all members of the public and their individual concerns.

The TCC also agrees ACT government staff should not be subjected to unacceptable behaviour from members of the public.

The TCC is willing to continue to work with ACTPLA to ensure the Tuggeranong community remains fully informed of planning issues in the valley through a positive and informative consultation process.

Meanwhile the TCC will hold its annual general meeting on September 7.

The meeting will be held at the Tuggeranong Southern Cross Club commencing at 7.30pm.

Members and guests are invited to attend.