

Tuggeranong Community Council

Chief Minister talks

By President Darryl Johnston

MASS public transport, a Valley university and a new southern cemetery were high on the agenda when TCC vice president Colin Petrie and I recently met with ACT Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope. This is the third in what have become regular discussions between the TCC and the Chief Minister.

In opening the talks we referred the Chief Minister to a recent TCC motion calling on the ACT Government to begin planning for the introduction of a rail-based mass public transport system linking Tuggeranong to other Canberra town centres and Queanbeyan by 2030. We said the TCC believed the Canberra/Queanbeyan region cannot rely on buses alone for its future public transport needs and planning must begin now for the introduction of a mass public transport system to meet Canberra and Queanbeyan's forecast growth to approx 600,000 by 2030.

Mr Stanhope said initial government costings and modelling had shown that a light rail system in Canberra would cost \$3 billion. It also showed that unlike other cities that had developed light rail systems, Canberra did not have the population mass to warrant one at this point. However he said that the government kept an open mind and he believed that a light rail system for Canberra was inevitable, possibly developed in stages over a number of years.

We also raised the issue of the proposed location of the new Southern Cemetery at Hume. I said that while the TCC supports a new southern cemetery many TCC members and residents are concerned over its proposed location. There are also concerns over the lack of a public transport link, the site is too rocky and it contains natural water springs.

Mr Stanhope responded that he expected an announcement soon on a new Southern Cemetery. He said a site for the new southern cemetery would undergo an extensive geotechnical survey, planning and design work that will cover public transport issues. The day following our meeting, Mr Stanhope announced the new Southern Cemetery and Crematorium would proceed at Hume and he has allocated more than \$720,000 for design works. He also announced that further consultation on the project would take place with religious groups and the community. The TCC will continue to take an active role in this project.

On the issue of expanding tertiary education services and facilities in Tuggeranong the Chief Minister said the TCC's call for establishing a combined technical college and university in Tuggeranong had merit. He agreed tertiary education facilities were focused in the north and suggested the TCC play a part in discussions to amalgamate the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and the University of Canberra (UC).

He said the Education Minister is due to announce the appointment of a tertiary education expert to look at the proposals from the Hawke Review on greater collaboration between the CIT and UC. The next TCC meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 3. The Uniting Aged Care Group will present on their Gordon aged care project. The meeting will commence at 7.30pm in the upstairs conference room at the Tuggeranong Southern Cross Club at Greenway.