

Transcript of audio recording of meeting of Chief Minister Jon Stanhope with Oaks Estate residents in the Oaks Estate Community Hall, 9.30am, 5 May 2010.

James Mengus
John Stanhope
Pleased to meet you

James Mengus

I guess we were aware of the two current media releases as well what came down to talking about infrastructure project future ----* budget. One was for restoration works to 9 Hazel St and the other one was for a possible upgrading, including a playground I think in principle we support those pretty much over particularly 9 Hazel St obviously we are keen to sort of come away from this meeting leading into an understanding and how we can do further dialogue around those issues and what level of community engagement we can have primarily at the moment ----- particularly for instance ---- If we do a playground upgrade ----

Jon Stanhope

Well let me say just a few words --- I'd be very happy to go through it but I suppose just to understand some of my thinking.

I'm very happy for the invitation to be here today and thank you for that and it's interesting that when you called in just to check the map ---

I have and I must say, I've been minister in urban services now for just under two years and I take the role very seriously. I get around and I try to understand things and Oaks Estate because of it's geography, because of it's location, it's not a place I drive through very regularly and not a place I see and I will concede I have probably not paid Oaks Estate much attention until I became minister for --- and responsibility for urban services and came to Oaks Estate probably for the first time in that role maybe 15 months ago and that Oak Estate needs a lift and I began discussions with plans and with others about well, where Oaks Estate figures. Indeed some of my interests in relation to Oaks Estate generally how the government might respond to some of the issues just around urban community probably aroused from the owner from the abattoir to establish a residential estate there which was unsuccessful in particularly with ACTPLA and is now turned into an industrial estate.

I must say, despite even being Chief Minister, systems have a way of actually churning or rolling of their own meaningful volition. I would support a prospect of residential buildings, I must say the context of affordability housing and the nature of ----- sustainability of dense growth but it seems to me in an environment where we have been battling -----for affordable housing just -----things have come, I didn't have a particular philosophical, ideological or planning basis concern with the prospect of possible additional housing and I think it was just through and it might even have been in relation back when I first came to Oaks Estate in this role, this is in terms of amenity issue

* *n.b.* Dashes indicate recorded words/sentences which could not be clearly understood.

around the tree, park, just some basics gathering maintenance, mowing and I must say it did cause me some concern. As it transpires ACTPLA knocked the lodged DA for the abattoir on the head and the CIC copped that, and converted plans from residential to industrial and even that is interesting in the context of the implications of that of Oaks Estate. Oaks Estate is a part of the ACT, it's a part of Canberra and it deserves the exact same level of attention and investment and concerns as the rest of the ACT and I think that just in terms of the ---- amenity, it's probably fair to say, it's not receiving that and I have discussed this with Mr Bozz who's the head of --- that I have an expectation that Oaks Estate will have some of the maintenance challenges that --- we all never the less receive exactly the same level, it will have the same numbers of, you know, we have a formula of --- every street gets mowed exactly the same number of times and I expect Oaks Estate to get treated exactly the same way as every other place, and I think you have a right to be critical of the level this is maintained. When I first drove around and inspected the place there was a tree across the street here outside your community hall. If there was a tree across the street at Ainslie or in Kambah or in Kaleen it would be removed within a day by --- if it was a tree that has been sawn down, still was alive, that I came here 2 years ago that tree was on the street. There is no half cut down tree lying across a street anywhere in the whole of the ACT except in the Oaks Estate and it is simply not acceptable.

Person speaking

IT IS A WEAK TREE

Jon Stanhope

It's a weak tree but somebody has sawn it off three quarters and it has collapsed on the street, the tree hasn't died, it is still growing, but I suppose I haven't ----the level of attention that's been provided -----this post and rail fence up there it's a disgrace. If a post and rail fence had collapsed in Ainslie or Kaleen or Kambah it would have either been fixed or it would have been removed and replaced and it's not acceptable to me that in Oaks Estate there's a post and rail fence ----something should have been done with it and it should be just part of routine maintenance, so that's where I'm coming from but there is some challenges presented. ----I guess I'm saying that I except we have not done this well by Oaks Estate as the govt should have and I would like to change that. But it does represent some challenges for us but some of the basic maintenance stuff should simply be done at the same level as the rest of Canberra expects and that is my expectation.

And we started ---I don't know if you've noticed that there is now more regular mowing at the park and perhaps it hasn't extended much beyond that and in this last budget what I did and I was aware at the time of the budget we were having this meeting and I knew I'd have an opportunity to speak about basically just as a start finally as an expression of a commitment I have put \$100,000 in the budget for some basic community structure but I knew I would be coming here today and I just wanted to make this offer to you there's \$100,000 in the capital upgrade program and a want of ----- description and just signal my intent ---- it says Oaks Estate upgrade BBQ's, picnic areas and playground and I guess that's how broad it is and I would I guess the offer I would make to you today is there \$100,000 and I would expect you to advise --- how you would like that \$100,000

spent. It's got that ---- essentially just for some amenity and the govt --- community should take up and advise exactly how you think you'd like that \$100,000 spent. ----- just so you understand ---- it was really \$100,000 which I put in basically knowing I was coming here today to be able to say to you there's \$100,000 you decide ---

Person speaking

So Jon are you saying ---the post and rail

No that's going to be fixed definitely ACT roads are going to fix that. They are either going to remove it and put something else there or fix it and they are going to remove this tree and go around and clean up. It's nothing to do with that money.

Person speaking (inaudible)

Just to conclude and similarly Robertson house, we do have some conditions, you know more about it that we do, but I'm very keen on our heritage and I must say I wasn't aware of the heritage significance of Robertson house beyond about two years ago, I still find -- --all over the territory that I wasn't aware of ----and again I'm aware that ----- and there's \$165,000 in the budget for Robertson house but once again it was probably a little pre-empting but I was sending a signal that I was a little tired of all these reasons why things can't be done and so really just concentrate the minds of my visions most particularly of heritage, I have put \$165,000 in the budget, basically to send a signal that look I got these reports of why it's probably too hard -----what are we going to do so we do nothing and another year goes by and the termites gnaw away and -----so at least its \$165,000 in which I'm just essentially saying to my officials for goodness sake lets make some decisions about Robertson house and it seems to me that \$165,000 if you can't do something with \$165,000 its probably beyond I would have thought. But I know how these things work, in the end there will be another study, there will be a conservation management plan, there will be a whole stack of reasons why nothing can be done but I think I would like Robertson house to be preserved and saved and then hand it over to one of our property managers and utilize for a community purpose that's what I would like to see happen with Robertson house. There's \$165,000 designed -----.

I just say and I'm interested in your response to that and how you would manage it and there's just one other thing that I've done which might also be acknowledged I was meeting today and I will be happy to take your advice on it, I happen to have a personal view that just in the context that the govt hasn't made decisions that it seems to me that Oaks Estate needs some renewal. We'll probably all agree with that but probably perhaps not agree necessarily on exactly how we can achieve this. But I have a view that it would be positive but I very much welcome your views for some additional construction activity. I'm advised there are 10 blocks of residential capable land that could easily be sold for housing, 10 houses. I just have a view about urban renewal and investment, new people, a bit of new life and I believe certainly the govt agenda that----- 5 – 10 thousand blocks of land over the next 2 years -----10,000 potentially for sale in Oaks Estate and I personally think that would give the thing new houses new structures, activities new amenities just a bit more critical mass and just some renewal as well as get some opportunities perhaps for even with some investment a couple of new roads additional

sewerage capacity. Once again I'm being advised now by my department that Oaks Estate sewerage couldn't even handle 10 more houses which I find a bit more remarkable and I suggest we upgrade it.

That's 3 things that I've done that I did notice as I started knowing that I was coming here today you tell me you've got other views I would be very pleased -----.

Person speaking

Future land release can we be advised where those locations are?

The map is produced

Jon Stanhope

I don't want to pre-emptive about this. I'd very much like you to take this away think about it and say to me or say to us well that's prime land here and we don't want it at leased tell me about it and actually inform us that -----

Person speaking

Years ago ----- (inaudible)

Jon Stanhope

There hasn't been much of an interest so it doesn't fit into the special cleaning there's still an ideological debate in the govt and the attitude I've adopted is look that the govt can't afford to pretend that Oaks Estate doesn't exist. Oaks Estate is not going away and so this notion -----residential blocks wasn't accepted -----because it didn't fit in the special function so we cop off -----so I think you will probably agree that a broader community conversation around that particular issue and my attitude of that as well is cleaning principle, it seems to me Queanbeyan is a reality it's a city and Oaks Estate in the context ----sustainability -----

I feel that myself, it seems to me that in a context of just the viability and the nature and the vibrancy of the community it's not good having vacant blocks of land sitting around, growing blooms, that's the view I have, I would prefer to not to live in a street with vacant blocks of land -----

Person speaking

And if it's in your own back yard, these two are in my own back yard and I think it's quite nice without any houses there.

Certainly we all -----

Person speaking

I'm more concerned about the old Mobil empty vacant lot there and what is proposed for that because there have been some changes over the last few years about having town house development in there or -----

Jon Stanhope

We have encouraged, we have 23 closed service stations in the ACT. There are 23 of them. There are unsightly, -----they're all vacant, a year ago we actually announced a change of use ----- on the redevelopment of service stations there a block of the urban landscape and this one falls within the same moratorium and I understand that the owners of the service station here have proposed its redevelopment from time to time and I am advised that the reason the owner hasn't proceeded with the redevelopment of that service station is that he has received advise that the Oaks Estate sewerage system can't handle it. That's not acceptable, it's not acceptable to me that Oaks Estate's can't sustain a single multimillion development as there's not enough sewerage capacity. It is my understanding that I can't speak for the owner but my understanding that the owner of that site has wanted to redevelop it. You might have views what you might want to see there -----

Person speaking

Standard development is not appropriate ----- shoved aside it's too difficult too hard that continues now the heritage ----- some guidelines ----- what might be appropriate ----- Allowing residential development along Canberra lines will just be mean tacky down market Canberra down market Queanbeyan standard that's one of the reasons the developer hasn't proceeded he wants to tack too many places on, its not just the matter of the sewerage line being at fault the greedy developer wants 50 units on the site I expect.

Jon Stanhope

Which wouldn't be approved by ---- what I meant by standard was the standard ACTPLA development application process is what I meant by that. I don't disagree with your essential point, is that heritage plans have been commenced but not concluded, master plans have been commenced but not concluded and it might be in relation to any proposal around your views about how to revitalize and regenerate you wouldn't want to say to me that we don't want anything to happen till there is a proper master plan process. And I accept that.

Person speaking

That would be nice.

Person speaking

Just to clarify I don't think --is anti development as such ----opportunity for 10 residential lots to be released in the future, ---- is any prospect there single dwelling on them --- history of Oaks Estate-----haphazard planning and all other issues -----however that which Sheila raised, the Mobil site, is the gateway to Oaks Estate it used to be ---- contained in that planning process the last thing we would like to see is as you enter Oaks Estate which is also adjacent opposite to the original Oaks building as well is a unit development of any density and five years -----

That we will be highly oppositional to us because it's not any way selective of the nature of Oaks Estate. Caldwell residents wouldn't stand for it, Tharwa residents wouldn't stand for it; so we would take a stand of opposition.

Jon Stanhope

I accept that, and I understand that.

Person speaking (Inaudible)

Person continued

----- 56% by ratio ----I guess the critical thing for us is to think about is issues talking about the general community amenity -----how do we walk out of this meeting --with understanding on how we do things ---heritage planning process 9 Hazel St what we look at the process there -----inaudible ----poor proposal about utilizing Hazel St and the idea went that Hazel St would be given to an organization whether it be community housing or whatever it happened to be with the idea to restore it and adjacent land -----used best practice---- in the truest sense of the word-----whereby it had other studios or other sorts of things involved in that as well recollecting in the odd nature of Oaks Estate and the people that had been attracted to it ----- profits from that went back into the restoration management of the Hazel St property. We had the National Trust had expressed principal interest Canberra University expressed heritage management guide master builders assoc HIA as well which meant we had training opportunity for apprentices working on heritage buildings. We had ----- tertiary students ----- whether take that proposal actually rework it now as it's a couple of years old -----.

Jon Stanhope

I must say I haven't discussed with the department ---I put it in on the last day, I didn't have a business card there is no feasibility in it. There is \$165,000. It's in the budget and it's for Robertson House and in terms of management in terms of development of a plan for the house itself---I feel very comfortable in the proposal for the management of the project we would have some formal requirements around conservation management and - -----but certainly -----about project ---I have an interest in the prospect of how vacant land within the precinct might be better utilized. We have community house in Canberra and an organization and a very impressive and successful organization and we buy land ----- --unique formula and it might be that model -----Robertson House precinct but I have a completely open mind -----as I said before in relation to these 10 sites that have been identified for me it's very much a conversation starter with you the Oaks Estate community and in context of our land release program it's essentially irrelevant the ACT govt has rolled out land, 10 blocks in Oaks Estate is irrelevant-----my interest is to identify land -----for sale --what can the govt do in the context of lifting the community increasing its involvement and assisting you with some renewable and if you would come back to me as representatives of Oaks Estate we think this is a crazy idea it will be given serious weight..

Person speaking

Can I just say we've always argued -----inaudible-----
----- issues on the river corridor

Jon Stanhope

I understand what you're saying. I do understand but the issue in relation to the corridor to Molonglo is the same its length it's a broader issue I understand I don't disagree I understand and sympathise absolutely I can also tell you the cost --- it cost us \$300,000 a kilometre -----I'm just responding.

Person speaking

--- we have issues different to other suburbs and they are not being addressed. ---The issue is that making sure the houses are being built do not destroy all the other values that are here.

Jon Stanhope

--- but I understand the essence of what you are saying any govt plan should be a strictly controlled subject to the appropriate master plan, appropriate heritage plan and should only be pursued when there is agreement around of the style and nature -----.

Person speaking

One of the issues with the heritage is that they don't even know --- because it's all been nominated and nothing is ever... the nominations have never been followed through and the Heritage Unit themselves don't even know what is out here and they have no decision making process and nothing is ever finalized.

Person speaking

On that score, in terms of the current future planning process, can we get an understanding on that level of commitment to recommence and who we will be liaising with and general ideas of price range and so forth. I think that -----

Jon Stanhope

Time lines around future planning and I guess there are always timelines and they always seem excessive. That's just a reality and there is no money in this budget for master plans but there are ways of achieving master plans classed as the chicken and egg there were --- decision even just to develop a public piece of land. It might be the Land Development Agency or whoever might be interested and through that process may fund the necessary master plan. If that weren't an appropriate way forward then we would have to wait for another budget or I would have to actually to see what passage there is within an existing discretionary funding most particularly within ACTPLA or the Land Development Agency ----- funding within the budget for master planning. I think to respond to your question really I would probably be interested in a slightly more formal do than yours perhaps if you were to write to me after this meeting and suggest and say, well, this is what we think, this is what we think about the \$165,000, this is how we think you might say to me that you think that \$165,000 might be better utilized with a development of a conservation management plan. I put it in there for restoration etc. I just perceived -----
- if you were to say to me chief minister there's \$165,000 what do you think if we devoted \$165,000 for finalization of heritage plan or master plan not just Robertson house but the whole of Oaks Estate you might say let's do first things first, lets finalize the heritage plan. There's \$165,000 available for heritage this is how we think it will be best used or you might plan the ideas that \$165,000--does give you some latitude in

relation about other ideas about community partnership, community participation in restoration and future use of Robertson House and you might have a preference for that and similarly the other \$100,000 you might have some views on how you think that might best be used ----and I'd be interested in whether you would feel more comfortable if before the govt began the process the potential sale you would say, look, we disagree in principle we really would like some significant Oaks Estate master plan to be completed before we can think about those things, yet maybe we can give you a degree of comfort in terms of the style of development etc. -----.

Persons speaking (initially inaudible)

----- Mobil depot is actually developed because that's quite a big project the gateway.

what he's currently considering -----

I understand there is still environmental cleaning ---so when that's finished they will be sitting on an empty block ---pushing for development

Time ticking away

Would you be happy to write back to me?

Yes of course absolutely ----- pretty much want to establish a partnership -----

Gungahlin style ----- working directly in terms of -----

even just in relation to some of the fundamentals issues around -----

another problem we may have ----- rezone the whole of Oaks Estate -----

south side of railway street ----- the only access to that land is through Oaks Estate ----

Road issues

Traffic lights at Fairbairn traffic backs all the way up to the bridge sometimes in the morning it's a major traffic hazard -----

Tony

There's a bunch of issues there Chief, of the issues that are here, there's about half a dozen I'll undertake to get fixed within a week, of the rest I need to take advice from the dept of the safety issues and the flow on affect, there's a couple of other things if I may Chief. I meet regularly with the chief planning officer and the head of public services in a forum and I'll raise this as an agenda item the issues you've raised so there's ----- we also meet the chief planning officer and myself, with the Queanbeyan council on planning issues and I'll be happy to raise that issue that you mentioned (the railway) and

I'm also happy to come out perhaps next week and walk about the river corridor to see what your talking about have a guided tour so I can understand. There are about 6 – dozen issues I can fix fairly quickly the others ----- We'll go on a bit of a trek.

Couple of points to be discussed is the Community billboard ---- corner shop ----- possible upgrade, re parking ----- corner store is a major danger ----

Jon Stanhope

We've got a building program \$16,000 each for a billboard. Don't take it out of the \$100,000 we provide billboard.

Person speaking

Location

Jon Stanhope

We put it in shopping centres ---- we've got a standard sign -----
Inaudible.

Person speaking (inaudible)

Jon Stanhope

I understand your frustration and I'm essentially interested in today -----but it does have limitations, limitations around money -----

Person speaking

What's the potential we can have that by 2013 (which?) these planning processes.

Jon Stanhope

I have to take advice, it's about money, it's about resources, it's about time and it's about renewal ---what I'm suggesting to you today my will is strong both in context as I say no resources have been provided in this budget for a master plan and I don't want to mislead you---- and we will start the process and hopefully we will be able to get – lined up in relation to our way forward and I have to say that with the funding for Robertson House that's in the budget I am deliberately sending a very strong signal that I won't accept reasons anymore for not doing anything. It is money and money does tend to speak at least Robertson House now has \$165,000 allocated to it and I look forward to working with you on how you think we might progress with that and again I do accept there is no conservation management plan in place ----- you can't do anything until you've worked out what you're going to do and I know this process with processes there's always extensive timelines but I think --- I accept what you said before, you can't just look at Robertson House in isolation. There's a precinct, there's vacant land beside it and there is obviously opportunity there if you think of it laterally and innovatively there are opportunities within the precinct --- I have no view about it and will be happy to accept views.

Person speaking

I was just wondering if there would be any value in us sending a proposal to community housing about that Mobil depot site if there were funds for community housing to take that over from the current owner perhaps it might be a better option for Oaks Estate.

I would be more than happy, if you would put it in writing, paper trail is always good --- we would have to buy this site (Mobil service station). There is a possibility that --- house in Canberra which is a community organization which we provide a 50 million dollar rolling loan for it produces community housing and affordable housing and we've cast them to providing a thousand units of housing over the next few years and they're well on the way, but they provide housing at 75% at market value for sale and 75% of market value for rent. We asked them to provide 1000 units -----currently constructing 104 units on Flemington Rd and well on the way and it might be that community housing in Canberra ---tough decisions but I understand what you are saying but my immediate hesitation it that would require the ACT govt well the community of Canberra to purchase this site and they could only purchase this site if they were able to get a good return on the investment that's the difficulty depending on what-----the proposal would be, what the site is worth under the existing Territory plan arrangements that pertain to a site of that size, and in that place, and how many units if you were to lodge a development application now for what you would do with it say 20 - 30 units whatever and that would determine the value of the land.

Person speaking

---- Moratorium -----would not like to see a major development in Oaks Estate.

Jon Stanhope

I understand that ----- that would probably change the Territory Plan.

Person speaking

Just on the issue of community housing in George St -----between 40% and 50% is the vacancy rate as an average I believe.

Is that right? (Jon Stanhope)

Yes, if given the opportunity --- to get housing in Oaks Estate a lot of people say no thank you. There are some long-term tenants there who love the place but it's being used as a dumping ground as well. A lot of tenants are very short term and ----- there is some great issues that have been dealt with but -----

Would like to try and develop some engagement to work out how and what future potential there are for the removal and replacement of those flats and buildings built very cheaply and not in keeping with Oaks Estate ---of greater value to the community and also from a housing perspective as well if there's a 40% vacancy rate ----- we would also like a follow up meeting as well if possible.

Jon Stanhope

Are there social issues?

Yes

---transport---

It's essentially emergency community housing for single males.

----- drivers of fast cars putting residents and their children at risk.

Inaudible

OK thank you very much everybody

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