

# Oaks Estate News

## Oaks Estate Progress Association

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### Oaks Estate Master Plan and Precinct Code

The Master Plan for Oaks Estate has been finalised, and a draft Precinct Code has been released. The Master Plan outlines the vision for the future of our neighborhood. Some good statements were made in the Master Plan about protecting the rural outlook, the local environment and the heritage character of the Oaks Estate Village.

However, the devil is in the detail of the draft Precinct Code, which is the document which sets down in law the planning restrictions of what people can and can't do on their property.

The OEPA believes the draft Precinct Code does not follow the vision of the Master Plan, and instead of protecting the character of the Village, leaves us vulnerable to developers who will be able to in-fill all land along McEwan Ave and Railway Street with cheap apartment blocks, completing destroying the existing character of our community.

#### The OEPA's key concerns are:

There are site coverage rules, but no plot ratios. In the area south of Hazel St, the draft Precinct Code allows for 3 storey apartment blocks that cover nearly 50% of the lot. OEPA will argue strongly against ANY new apartment blocks, because there are already more apartments than houses in Oaks Estate. Any more will put too much strain on our infrastructure and change the nature of our heritage community.

In the older residential area, the draft Precinct Code allows for 2 storey, 500 sq. m. houses that cover one third of the block. There are no restrictions to ensure new development is designed in keeping with the area. This means you could have a new-build massive McMansion plonked right next door to you, of the design style of houses in Crace or Gunghalin.

OEPA is also concerned that planners are pushing for increased commercial development.

In fact, the draft Precinct Code requires that the ground floor of ALL development on McEwan Ave and Railway Street is developed for commercial use. This is not in keeping with the existing character of Oaks Estate, and it will bring parking and noise problems to our community.

#### Have your say!

The Precinct Code is online, and we encourage everyone to take the time to read it and send in their comments. Go to [www.planning.act.gov.au](http://www.planning.act.gov.au). On the homepage scroll down to the *Latest News* and click the link for *Planning changes for Weston and Oaks Estate*. Here you will find the draft Precinct Code and your comments can be sent to [terrplan@act.gov.au](mailto:terrplan@act.gov.au) If you also send a copy to OEPA, we will put everyone's comments up on our website.

#### Public Consultation

The planners are holding a drop in session at the community hall on William Street on Saturday 28 February from 10am to 1pm. Consultations that are spread out over time tend to dilute the voice of the community, where people do not feel comfortable asking the hard questions, or have the opportunity to share their concerns with other community members. OEPA strongly suggests everyone coming at 11am, so we can hold a town-hall style community meeting as a group, and make our voices heard loud and clear.

*Kate Gauthier*  
OEPA Secretary

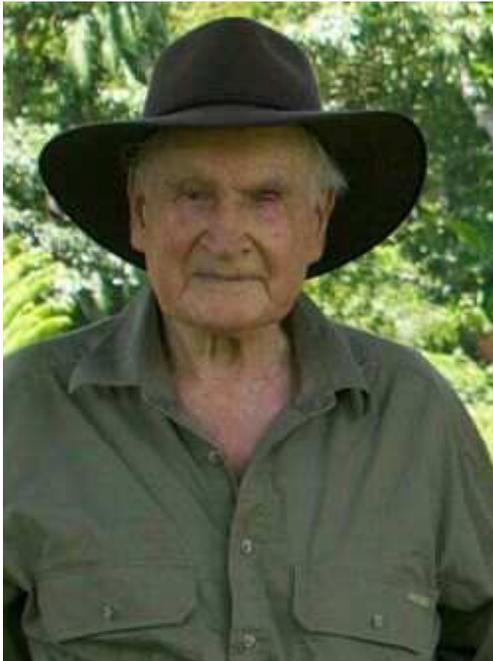
#### **Precinct Code —> Population Boom**

If all the available land in Oaks Estate were redeveloped, as allowed in the draft precinct code, there could be another 668 people.

The last census put us at 260 people, so we could go from 260 to 928 people (almost 4 times our population).

As a conservative estimate, just the Mobil site development, plus 2 empty lots and the white warehouse, would be 307 more people.

**Vale Capt. Bede Tongs MM OAM**



Bede Tongs, one of Oaks Estate's most esteemed elders, died on 14 January.

The Oaks Estate that Bede Tongs came to in 1946, after returning from distinguished military service in New Guinea, was one of uncertainty. In those days the future of Oaks Estate was often the topic of prolonged discussion in government planning authorities. The *Canberra Times* in 1950 reported that "the future of Oaks Estate as a planned community or whether it must be liquidated quickly" was being debated.

Bede joined the Oaks Estate Progress Association's campaigns to improve the community facilities and was President of the Association during the 1950s and 1960s. Previous Progress Association committees had campaigned for basic water and electricity services, achieving those in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

In 1953 Oaks Estate obtained a community hall. Bede gifted to the community the land on which the hall stands in William Street, the area of open space next to it, and the old preschool site (the present playground area) beside that.

The hall was an old dormitory building, an ex-Eastlake hostel hut. It arrived on the back of a truck. The Oaks Estate community renovated the building using volunteer labour and their own materials.

Having led through direct action, Bede and the committee continued to campaign on issues including the construction of the pre-school playground. The Oaks Estate fundraising Queen Competition of 1954 was just one successful

activity through which the Progress Association raised money for the construction and furnishing of the proposed play centre.

Other issues pursued included improvements to the existing but rudimentary fire protection, a bus shelter for the hard earned new bus service, and the provision of sewerage, kerbs, gutters and footpaths.

I have nothing but admiration for our former Oaks Estate community leaders & their achievements. It would have been so hard to persist with what were often many years of effort. The Oaks Estate community of the past lived in far less comfortable circumstances than we do today. They weren't just trying to improve Oaks Estate. They were working to ensure the community's very existence.

Bede maintained a strong interest in the affairs of Oaks Estate and remained active in the Progress Association. He is also a veteran of Kokoda and the Aitape-Wewak campaign in New Guinea and a former President of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion Association. In recent years Bede and his son Garry made many trips back to PNG helping to improve living conditions in villages along the Kokoda Track. Bede was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in June last year.

*Karen Williams*

**Bede Tongs Hero of the Kokoda Track**

Bede Tongs joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Militia Battalion in February 1940, the unit that spent the longest time serving on the Kokoda Track.

As a 22-year-old sergeant during the Australian advance at Eora Creek-Templeton's Crossing, Bede took control of his platoon after its officer Lieutenant Colin Richardson was hit in the chest and evacuated.

Bede positioned his men for an attack based on 'fire and movement' and ordered them to fix bayonets.

Rather than expose his men to a frontal attack on the Japanese positions, Bede crawled along an enemy fire lane alone and destroyed a machine-gun position with grenades.

His action opened the way for his men to take the Japanese position and earned him the Military Medal for bravery.

Bede led his men through to see the Australian flag flying again over Kokoda, arriving there on 4 November 1942. He served with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion through the battles for Oivi and the beachheads before he was evacuated to Port Moresby suffering from malaria, scrub typhus and yellow fever.

Bede recovered and, after the 3rd Battalion was disbanded in 1943, he joined the 2nd/3rd Battalion, being commissioned in the field during the Aitape-Wewak Campaign.

Later, in 1953, he served in the Korean War as a frontline observer for Eastern Command.

Extract from obituary by Patrick Lindsay on the website of Keith Jackson & Friends: PNG ATTITUDE, 15 Jan 2015: <[http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa\\_people](http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people)>

### ***Soldier at Rest in the Jungle***

*A poem by Bede Tongs*

Please let me be, it is now so peaceful.  
No more grenades, shot and shell to foul the air.

My earthen nest was made by soldiers true  
who prayed as they dug the jungle soil.  
Prayed, as we all have the same God.

I heard the praying, but I could not speak.  
One said, "We played together at school in  
Bowral town."  
Little did they know then, one would lay the other  
down  
in a faraway place fighting for Home and Country  
in a vicious war.

There are many soldiers resting in the jungle, like  
me.

We fought and died, well off the beaten track  
in serenity - moss, ferns, tree orchids,  
colourful butterflies and Birds of Paradise.

Do not mourn for long, at times remember me,  
I fought for peace.  
I am at peace.

My loved ones, my friends, let me be...

### **The Robertsons' House**

GML Heritage has been commissioned by the ACT Property Group to produce a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Robertsons' House in Hazel Street. The CMP will guide how the Robertsons' House is to be looked after in future years. GML is writing a report that makes recommendations for what can be done with the Robertsons' House. The house is fragile in terms of making major changes. So, the key question to be answered by the report is how can the house be used without major change?

This year Karen Williams' *Three Cornerstones* walk provides the setting for the wartime stories of Oaks Estate. Karen will talk about Oaks Estate as a community supporting each other through the many burdens and casualties of war. The

walk will include a guided tour of The Robertsons' House.

When: Sunday 19 April 2015 at 9.30-11.30 am.  
Where: Meet at The Robertsons' House (9 Hazel Street, Oaks Estate), with morning tea provided after the walk. More in the next newsletter.

### **NBN – what's happening?**

You may recall the original advice from NBN: that the build would be complete by October last year. Oaks Estate is one of the few areas of Canberra to remain on the original plan for free NBN connection to the house. There have been some problems with some people getting connected, with confusing communication from NBN Co.

You may have received a small (210 x 100mm) unaddressed notice in your letterbox back in November, headed "Sorry, we were unable to connect your property". This wasn't the notice you should have received.

However, in January this year, if you own your property or rent privately, you or your landlord should have received a letter from Jessica Miller at NBN, enclosing an "NBN Equipment Installation Authority Form". That form is important as it gives permission for NBN to complete the connection process up to the outside of your house or flat. Whoever owns the property needs to fill the form out, sign it and get it back to NBN, pronto. If you own or rent privately and need a copy of this form, you can email [oepea@hotmail.com.au](mailto:oepea@hotmail.com.au), or print it from our website [oaksestateact.org](http://oaksestateact.org). Post or email it to Ms Miller at the address on the form.

The good news is that connection of your house or flat will be free. NBN Co will install a utility box on the outside of your property and you can then organise your own internet service provider. Don't miss out on the opportunity. The existing copper wire phone system in Oaks Estate will be scrapped around 18 months after the NBN is available. If you do not have an NBN Box, you will have no phone or internet and you will have missed the chance to get NBN free.

*Kate Gauthier, OEPA Secretary*

### **Oaks Estate Disaster Preparedness Project**

In December, Southside Community Services hosted a meeting at the Community Hall between Oaks Estate community members and various branches of the emergency services.

This meeting was aimed at increasing the local community's resilience against any potential natural disasters. It covered what residents can

do to minimise risk around their own home and prepare for possible evacuation, as well as how the emergency services respond to calls for assistance.

Another aspect of the meeting was that it gave community members a chance to hear from and question TAMS about what it does to reduce the risk of grass fires in the lands around Oaks Estate spreading into the village and affecting lives and properties.

About twenty Oaks Estate residents attended, and were almost outnumbered by the number of presenters from the organisations and emergency services – SES, Ambos, RFS, Fire and Rescue, TAMS and Red Cross. Topics covered included emergency cross-border arrangements; the emotional impact of natural disasters; personal and household planning for emergencies; checking on elderly, disabled or unwell neighbours; making homes less vulnerable to fire and storms; insurance coverage; finding information about developing threats; and the meaning of the various ‘fire ratings’ applying to the potential risk of bushfire.

Concerns raised by residents included low water pressure for ‘wetting down’ the exterior of homes, when everyone is trying to do the same thing, or for trying to fight a fire. Also discussed was the impact of potential loss of electricity supply during emergencies.

Other concerns raised related to high, dry grasses on the government and privately leased lands surrounding Oaks Estate, including on the river corridors.

Railway Street was also a matter of concern to some residents, who noted that this main exit route from Oaks Estate may be unusable during fires if the overgrown verges are themselves burning. Residents also noted that some lands within Oaks Estate (including the old Mobil site and the mulch pile to the west) present a risk.

Southside Community Services undertook to follow-up on questions which could not be fully answered on the night.

For a full report of the meeting, phone or email Charlie Richardson at Southside. He will gladly supply all the info, including full ownership details of all the lands surrounding Oaks Estate. Also...look out for another event in April, including a disaster-related ‘trivia’ competition at the Community Hall.

*Charlie Richardson*

Phone 6126 4700 or email

[Charlie.Richardson@sscs.org.au](mailto:Charlie.Richardson@sscs.org.au)

### **Inner South Canberra Community Council**

Oaks Estate received special acknowledgement at the ISCCC AGM in mid-November last year for our contribution in 2014 to ISCCC achievements.

The community of Oaks Estate was thanked for sharing our knowledge and understanding of heritage, environment and planning issues and for sharing the fun with the Canberra/Queanbeyan community during the various village public events we hosted.

ISCCC committee members were very pleased to see what we have here in Oaks Estate, especially the river corridor and the river junction.

#### **Thanks to ISCCC**

OEPA once again thanks ISCCC for their advice and their support of Oaks Estate issues and for financial assistance with producing our newsletters and community flyers.

### ***On Demand* bus service in Oaks Estate**

Did you know that Q City Transit (formerly Deanes), the operator of the bus service in Queanbeyan, runs an *On Demand* bus service, called *Local Link*, that includes Oaks Estate?

There are three services per day (Monday to Friday only) at 9.30am, 11.00am and 1.30pm. *Local Link* connects people living in Queanbeyan & Oaks Estate with the Queanbeyan CBD and bus interchange, Rutledge Plaza, Queanbeyan Council Chambers, Queanbeyan Community Centre, the Hospital and Riverside Plaza, and return. The *On Demand* service runs during school holidays, unlike the normal bus route 838.

There is a flat fare of \$4.00 each way, with concession fares at \$2.00 each way. *Holders of Commonwealth pension cards are eligible for a ‘Red Ticket’, giving all day return travel on this bus and on all Q City Transit bus services for only \$2.50.* The *Red Ticket* allows travel from Oaks Estate, via the Queanbeyan bus interchange, to Civic or Woden and return, on both the 840 *On Demand* service and the normal 838 bus route.

It is necessary to *book at least the day before* you want to make the trip, including for the return journey. The route number is **840**, and you need to phone **6299 3722** to make your booking. When the recorded voice answers, press ‘2’. When the human answers, ask for the ‘*Local Link*’ bus, route 840.

It looks like the main pick-up point in Oaks Estate is the bus shelter on Hazel Street, but the *Local Link – On Demand* bus may also pickup from points in other streets in Oaks Estate.

*Charlie Richardson and Terry Williams*