Caring for Curtin

Curtin Residents Association Inc.

Newsletter

24 March 2026

## History of Curtin on ABC Radio Canberra

Curtin resident Frances McGee will be interviewed as part of the ABC Radio series on the history of Canberra. This is taking place today, Tuesday 24 March, at 3.35 pm on ABC Canberra (666 Triple Six). Frances is one of the authors of the renowned, well-illustrated book *Curtin Turns 50* that was published in 2014.

Now that Curtin is over 60 the book has been reprinted and more copies are available. Look out for it at the Curtin Autumn Fair.

# Save the date

## Curtin Autumn Fair, Saturday 2 May, 10 am–2 pm

There will be live music, handmade craft stalls, information stalls, jams, chutneys, books and yes! a sausage sizzle. More details coming soon.

## Yarralumla Creek. Flooding again. Concrete or nature-based?

The two recent floods in Yarralumla Creek are a reminder that our current stormwater infrastructure is not fit to deal with current rainfall—and even less with the increase in intense rainfall events that are expected to become more frequent.

Yarralumla Creek after the storms, looking south from Carruthers Street near the overbridge.

The big planning strategy project now underway by the ACT Government is called the Southern Gateway project. It includes the area surrounding Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and Athllon Drive into the neighbouring suburbs, extending from State Circle along the light rail route/ Adelaide Avenue and beyond Mawson to the southern end of Woden Valley. The planning is intended to enable 'intensification' all along the route, which is divided into seven study precincts. This implies planning for developing more buildings, and reviving the colour pencil scribbles shown along the 'edge' of Curtin in the Woden District Strategy.

The Curtin Residents Association believes that any development planning must give equal weight to managing the

The storm damage at the pedestrian/cycle bridge over Yarralumla Creek.

*Photographs*: John Spooner

rainfall catchment for the whole area as one. The challenge is for all the water that arrives upstream of Woden Town Centre to squeeze through the bottleneck between the Ivy high-rise block (which flooded recently) and Yarravale (currently being built on the former Pitch and Putt site at the junction of Yarralumla Creek and its tributary, Long Gully Creek, that runs beside Yamba Drive—which is also liable to flood at the intersection with Launceston Street). The light rail is also expected to squeeze through here. And the combined waters flow past Curtin, along the concrete channel that was recently ripped apart by flood waters.

The water can't all be pushed into narrow channels to flow away any faster. Planning for any developments must include managing the flow of water, capturing and slowing it at the upper end, and allowing it to expand over existing open land. In between flooding events this land can become valuable to plants, animals and people using it, as exciting ecological parks and recreation spaces for the current and new residents. The large low-lying area around the current north Woden roundabout should not be built on, but made into recreational park areas for the short-changed residents of the north Woden tower blocks. The Suburban Land Agency would like to see the roundabout 'replaced by a new neighbourhood centred on an enhanced and flood-resilient Yarralumla Creek'. There's a lot of real work to be done in a challenging location.

The storms in February and March brought flooding, with over 90 mm of rain in a single downpour. The bridge over Yarralumla Creek north of the roundabout was badly damaged, and is still not repaired.

The consequences of the flooding have also been written about in local media:

**9 February**: 'UPDATE: Storm causes week-long closure of school, Yarralumla Creek extensively damaged', at: www.region.com.au/two-vehicles-crushed-by-tree-schools-closed-following-weekend-storms.

**16 February**: 'Catchment-22: Why repairing the drain at Yarralumla Creek might be a washout', at: www.region.com.au/catchment-22-why-repairing-the-drain-at-yarralumla-creek-might-be-a-washout.

At the Residents Association AGM in November 2025 we had a presentation from Roslyn Prinsley on approaches to naturalisation and storm drainage. Here's a reminder link: www.curtinresidents.asn.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Curtin-Residents-2025-NbS-23-November-v3.pdf.

# Marymead CatholicCare's affordable housing units on Strangways Street

The Development Application (DA) for the 54 affordable units on the site of the presbytery next to Holy Trinity church is open for public comment.

We described the initial plans in our newsletter for June 2025.

Overall, the Curtin Residents Association supports this development. It provides a good number of affordable apartments (25 one-bedroom, 24 two-bedroom, 5 three-bedroom plus one resident caretaker's apartment) in three closely connected blocks. It has 59 resident parking places for its 54 units (not counting the caretaker) and 12 for visitors, although this is disappointingly 12 less than the normal expected for residents in multi-unit developments: two- and three-bedroom apartments should expect more than one car, and essential workers, shift workers among them, cannot rely on our inadequate public transport system. The DA includes a traffic report which notes that the public carparks around Curtin shops are just across the road. That's true, but as frequent users we notice that these places are already under stress. The traffic report used a survey of parking demand around the shops based on a single Sunday in winter. We believe this does not come anywhere close to seeing the surges in demand on school days and working days during the week.

Despite the ACT Government's positive policies to support electric vehicles there are no charging points for electric vehicles in the Marymead CatholicCare complex. We expect the number of chargeable EVs will steadily increase, and this will flow into affordable secondhand markets, meaning that there will be many EVs in this building well before it reaches its planned 50-year life. Providing some electric vehicle charging points is an essential step to future-proof the development.

The height of the building is 5 storeys of apartments, which is one storey more than zoning normally allows but below the zoning-allowed total height in metres. The highest is below the level of the

Architectural rendering showing the development from Strangways Street.

*Above*: Architectural rendering of the new buildings as seen by a cockatoo in a tree in the western open space.

*Left*: The development from a similar viewpoint above the Statesman hotel.

church spire. Most of the apartments face away from the nearby school, looking into the western open space. The architecture is interesting, much better than the big blank glassy blocks seen in many other developments around Woden.

The development will remove a number of existing trees but with planned new planting should reach 39% tree canopy cover, which is more than the ACT overall target. (We think 40% is an absolute minimum.) But many of these are small trees that are not sufficient to shade the west-facing windows for the main buildings. (To see the incoming sunshine, look at the unshaded sides in the shadow diagrams for 3 pm in summer). There are some existing old trees in the public space beyond, but we think that there should be better shade cover for these apartments.

The Development Application (number 202644959) can be accessed at ACT Planning here: www.planning.act.gov.au/applications-and-assessments/development-applications/browse-das/development-application-details?da-number=202644959.

In the DA the Development Outcomes report is weak on supporting evidence for many of its claims. The Design Review Panel report spends most of its effort on architectural quality outcomes, which introduces quality into the approval process. The building indeed promises to look interesting, rather than being a slab of glass façade or resembling a set of shipping containers, like many commercial developments.

The closing date for submissions on the DA is Thursday 2 April.

## City Services work in Curtin Square

ACT City Services is planning some minor refreshment works to the courtyard at the Curtin shops. According to Infrastructure Projects at City Services, this is up for consideration and will possibly include:

- repainting the existing seating
- removing two café-style tables to be replaced with two tables in locations that are better for pedestrian circulation
- relocating some of the existing rubbish bin shrouds to improve pedestrian movement
- installation of new blade signage to direct visitors to amenities [I hope this means signs indicating 'Toilets'—it's only four and a half years since we wrote to the minister about this]
- replacement of the existing water bubbler with a modern bottle refill station to be more visible and functional
- so-called 'discreet' pavement repair under a bench seat adjacent to the supermarket.

Some work has already be done to improve the lighting (installing brighter LEDs) and some of the trip hazards on the paving that were presumably more obvious than discreet.

The works noted are too minor to appear on the City Services website but we will try to report on progress.

## Petitions: CIT Plaza and Lyons amenities

### CIT Plaza in Woden Town Centre

The development of the CIT Plaza in Woden Town Centre is not quite finished, the new bus interchange is promised for April (but it has been raining recently…). The plan includes allowing vehicles to cross the plaza between the CIT and Woden Town Square. There is a petition to keep general traffic out of CIT Plaza and relocate the planned accessible parking places nearby. The petition closes on 4 May.

More information at: https://epetitions.parliament.act.gov.au/details/e-pet-024-26.

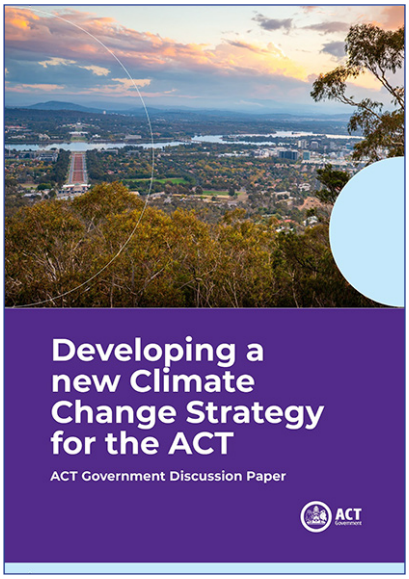
### Amenities in Lyons

Our neighbouring local shops in Lyons serve some south Curtin residents. There are no public toilets. Another petition asks for improved facilities at Lyons, closing 2 June: https://epetitions.parliament.act.gov.au/details/e-pet-027-26.

## Commonwealth Avenue even more closed

As they say, plan your trip! to avoid Commonwealth Avenue over Friday 27 – Sunday 29 March. Commonwealth Avenue will be totally closed from Parkes Way to Vernon Circle from the evening of Thursday 26 March to early morning Monday 30 March. This is for light rail stage 2A works, installing concrete for the rail tracks. The concrete goes into the median but the work requires closing the roadways for safety.

## Government Climate Change Strategy




A feedback survey on the government's future strategy in response to changing climate closed earlier this month. The discussion paper behind this is still available at: https://hdp-au-prod-app-act-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/3717/6956/1001/Developing_the_next_ACT_Climate_Change_Strategy_-_Discussion_Paper.pdf.

The talking points in this paper should influence the broad planning strategy for the Southern Gateway project, and the North Curtin Residential Area (previously known as the Curtin horse paddocks), and all future development applications. They note the needs for a skilled workforce to do the related design, building and electrical work; smarter EV charging; and better public transport and walkable neighbourhoods. Tree cover and the natural environment, traffic, electric power, insulating and draught-proofing buildings, and managing water usage are all included, but in very general terms and with some prompting questions that make important issues appear trivial. The Southern Gateway Corridor gets a mention, saying that it 'will place more value on public places that prioritise pedestrians, cycling and public transport as well as provision of social infrastructure required for sustainable communities'. Further community consultation is expected in the second half of the year.

## North Curtin Residential Area

The next stage in planning the development of 1300 dwellings in (Far) North Curtin (the horse paddocks, Curtin-over-the-creek) is about to come from the National Capital Authority. (Although the ACT Government owns the land, the planning rules are the responsibility of the NCA because the land is adjacent to the diplomatic precinct that will be built on the western part of the horse paddocks.)

The NCA intends to release the Draft DCPDD—the Detailed Conditions for Planning Design and Development—in a couple of weeks. There will be a public consultation period of 8 weeks. The draft conditions take into account the comments made by the public in the ACT consultations in 2024.

This is the area adjacent to Adelaide Avenue between Yarralumla Creek and Cotter Road. The planning gives an opportunity to include the creek banks as recreational and ecological space, as well as a challenge in flood management. It's expected there will be two roads giving access off Cotter Road (not McCulloch Street). The people living there will need some local facilities such as a shop and childcare, at least. We will look for these in the new conditions.

*Written by Chris Johnson, edited and designed by Ann Parkinson. Contributions welcome!*