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**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING: A CASE
STUDY OF CANBERRA, A.C.T.**

by
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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Division of Health, Design and Science
University of Canberra
February 2004**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been completed without the academic guidance and financial support of a large number of people. First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge my primary supervisor Associate Professor George Cho, for his academic guidance and tireless review of this thesis. I have learned much from his organizational skills. His personal advice was also particularly helpful to complete this thesis on time. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge my secondary supervisor Emeritus Professor Ken Taylor, for his valuable guidance and suggestions, which have been vital in determining the focus of my thesis. I also wish to gratefully acknowledge Dr. Donald Dunbar, Farhad Reza, Dr. Nozre Shobhan and Dr. Naila Rahman for their advice throughout the research.

I would also like to thank all Local Area Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC) members who participated in the research project and spent long hours in discussion with me. I am especially thankful to all LAPAC convenors and coordinator for introducing me to other LAPAC members for an interview. Without their cooperation, this thesis could never have been completed. Thanks are due to the planning staff at Planning and Land Management (PALM), now ACTPLA (ACT Planning and Land Authority) for providing me with information on LAPAC and many other planning-related documents. Thanks to Tania Cater, LAPAC coordinator and other Technical Officers, Richard Johnston, Ray Brown, Jim Kurrajong, Aaron Ashor, and Angela Devila—the new LAPAC coordinator. Thanks to Simon Corbell—planning spokesperson (currently the Minister for Planning) of the Australian Labor Party, ACT, for his long conversation with me. Special thanks to Shamsul Huda, a senior planner of National Capital Authority (NCA) for discussing planning issues over the phone and on previous occasions.

Thanks are also due to my postgraduate colleagues, Daniel Spooner, Anthony Chariton, Jeanne Young and Simon Foster in the Applied Ecology Research Group (AERG), with whom I always shared my research topic. I am also grateful to the University of Canberra for providing me with a President's Scholarship, which has been of great assistance financially. Thanks are also due to Dr. Ruth Shrensky and Amirul Kabir Chowdhury for their thoughtful suggestions to structure my thesis. Special thanks to Rose Smith of the University of Canberra Library staff for all her help and kindness, and to Wendy Cosford

for editing this thesis. I am grateful to all IT staff in the Division including David Formica who has been so generous with his time in helping me with computer problems, and Mike Palmer-Allen for providing the computer and other equipment.

Finally, to my wife, daughter, son and friends who always encouraged me to complete my thesis on time.

Thank you!

Kamal Uddin

ABSTRACT

Traditional models of public participation in planning have been criticized as 'top-down' segregating planners from ordinary citizens; thus, there has been a quest for greater public involvement in planning decisions and policy-making. The public demands a greater voice in planning and development affairs. To provide public input into the planning process, planning agencies often establish Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC) to involve the public in planning decisions. The increasing redevelopment pressure in inner city suburbs in most Australian cities has led to the creation of many advisory groups for advising planning agencies and Ministers for Planning on planning and development matters. These advisory committees usually consist of people of diverse backgrounds elected, selected and/or appointed by the planning agency to provide community input into planning policy making.

However, little is known about the context and operational process in the consultation processes of advisory committees. Much of the existing literature on public participation lacks widely applicable evaluation approaches for determining whether the existing context and process is fair and effective in the participation process. As complex social phenomena, public participation processes are influenced by contextual factors. This thesis examines the Terms of Reference and the operational process of planning advisory committees, and evaluates them through two proposed meta-criteria: fairness and effectiveness. LAPACs in Canberra have been selected for the evaluation of the participation process, providing a basis to develop a conceptual model for its improvement. The analysis is based on a theoretical framework, which focuses on the criteria of fairness and effectiveness in the public participation process.

This study uses a qualitative approach to data analysis using multi-method techniques such as focus interviews, document analysis and participant observation. The interviews were conducted with LAPAC members and other planning community who were directly or indirectly involved in the ACT's consultation process, and aware of its planning decisions. They are development proponents, the enthusiastic wider public, planning staff, the Minister for Planning, and planning spokespersons of political parties.

The data provide insight into the details of the proposed criteria to evaluate the fairness and effectiveness of a participation process. The results suggest that improving the participation process in a planning advisory committee requires changes in committee protocols, operational processes and planner roles in conducting the participation processes. Specifically, there needs to be a move away from static processes toward more strategic, active and accountable processes. This thesis suggests some practical steps, in order to ensure greater fairness and effectiveness in the participation process of a planning advisory committee, and recommends the proposed evaluative criteria as a new framework for evaluating planning advisory committees.

Keywords: planning advisory committees, public participation, fairness and effectiveness.

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Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 (Cwlth)

Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991 (A.C.T.)

Planning and Land Act 2002 (A.C.T.)

Unit Titles Act 2001 (A.C.T.)

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| AAT | Administrative Appeal Tribunal |
| ACT | Australian Capital Territory |
| ACTPLA | ACT Planning and Land Management |
| ALP | Austrian Labor Party |
| ANU | Australian National University |
| CPF | Community Planning Forum |
| CSIRO | Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation |
| DA | Development Applications |
| DRP | Design Review Panel |
| HQSD | High Quality Sustainable Design |
| KFDA | Kingston Foreshore Development Authority |
| LAPAC | Local Area Planning Advisory Committees |
| LDA | Land Development Authority |
| MLA | Member of Legislative Assembly |
| NCA | National Capital Authority |
| NCDC | National Capital Development Commission |
| NCP | National Capital Plan |
| NPG | Neighbourhood Planning Groups |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| PAC | Planning Advisory Committees |
| PACTT | Planning ACT Together |
| PALM | Planning and Land Management |
| PEA | Preliminary Environmental Assessments |
| TO | Technical Officers |
| TP | Territory Plan |
| TRA | Turner Residents Association |