

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

by  
**Mohammed Kamal Uddin**

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

EDITORIAL NOTE

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This thesis has been edited professionally by W. H. Cosford. Such editing has been undertaken with no alteration to the basic structure and arguments in the thesis.

Signature *W. H. Cosford*  
Editor Name: W. H. Cosford.

Date 22/2/04

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## 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 (Self-Government) Act 1988 (Cwlth)*

*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

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1. 1 BACKGROUND

The concept of public participation is not new to the planning community (Campbell and Marshall, 2000: 322); it was formally mandated in the early 1960s for urban renewal projects (Day, 1997: 423). For most renewal projects, public participation meant the creation of a seven-to-fifteen member advisory board mainly comprising community leaders: contractors, bankers, developers and legislators (Burke, 1979). The general public were not included at first, but in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, it was realized by city governments that the public should be involved by having a voice in and contributing substantially to programs that affected their destiny, rather than being allowed to participate as a means to obtain their cooperation (Catanese, 1984). Friedman and Kaplan (1975) noted that in the early 1960s, the city governments were obliged to create a mechanism that allowed residents of the area to be involved in planning and carrying out the programs. Residents were to have opportunities to contribute ideas to the urban renewal programs and to comment on its operation. The development proponents welcomed the involvement of residents, in the hope of increasing opportunities for the community to comment on development plans and government policies, and to identify issues that require attention by the government and planning agencies (Sewell and Phillips, 1979: 337). However, planning agencies emphasized improving communication between various citizen groups and planners, not adequately taking account of the community's views and their preferences in planning decisions (Arnstein, 1969; Day, 1997).

During the 1970s, many participation models were used to involve the community in the planning process, but, the models were criticized as 'top-down' and 'technocratic' for not allowing a fair representation of public interest in decision-making (Arnstein, 1969). Such criticisms included a lack of fairness in the public participation process, which led to ineffective participation (Webler, 1995: 79). As a result, there were many renewed efforts to use various participation techniques to overcome these deficiencies and to provide a less confrontational and more integrative way to involve the public in planning decisions (Smith, 1993; Dickinson, 1999). Among these mechanisms were advisory committees established by the authority to provide advice on planning and development

matters in the hope of channelling community contributions to the planning decision-making process (Thomas, 1995; Carson, 1996; Harding, 1998; Dickinson, 1999).

However, there is a lack of systematic evaluation by planning agencies of whether the process meets the participants' expectations of fairness and effectiveness, if the process is considered fair and effective. 'Fairness refers to what people are permitted to do in the consultation process, when participants come together with the intention of reaching understanding and making public decisions in a fair process' (Webler and Tuler, 2000: 569). 'Effectiveness refers to decision, which incorporates and mediates the broad spectrum of concerns on a given issues' (Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, 1997: 113). Webler (1992) notes that people will not participate if the process is not fair, and planners see no sense in participation that produces ineffective outcomes, so an analysis of public participation should focus on these two goals (Webler, 1995). This study is an attempt to evaluate the public participation process and to develop a conceptual model that is fair and effective for a planning advisory committee. Using a case study approach, this study evaluates a type of planning advisory committee: the Local Area Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC). The LAPAC is an advisory committee giving advice on planning and development matters to PALM, a planning agency of the Government of the Australian Capital Territory.

## **1.2 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, governments in Australia and elsewhere have repeatedly professed their commitment to community consultation and greater participation in planning decision-making (James and Blamey, 1999). As a result of this commitment, the government and planning agencies are increasingly establishing environmental and planning advisory committees to ensure that decisions are integrated, responsive, and comprehensive (Dickinson, 1999). There are currently many officially established opportunities for public participation in environmental decision-making in Australia (James, 1999). Taberner and Brunton (1996) noted that there were some 320 statutes, which dealt either principally or in part with environmental and planning matters in Australia. Most of the city councils across Australia have established advisory committees for environment and planning matters (Taberner and Brunton, 1996). These

advisory committees, often known as Citizens' Advisory Committees (CACs), are usually composed of a group of people either elected or appointed by the councils to provide a mechanism for public comment and input in the planning decision-making process. Through this medium the community can contribute to processes such as government decision-making and council's planning policies and management practices (Harding, 1998).

However, advisory committees are criticized by definition as ineffective in the theoretical literature (Houghton, 1988); as not being open and fair forms of public participation, since 'selected members of a committee may be acting with vested interests in the decision or development proposal under review rather than in the interests of the wider community' (Harding, 1998: 116). Arnstein (1969) commented that 'in the name of citizen participation, people are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards for the express purpose of "educating" them or engineering their support, and that advisory boards may be formed by the proponents as a public relations exercise to "win" the support of neighborhood and community groups' (Arnstein, 1969: 218).

Given the criticism of this form of public participation, 'the advisory committees are seen as an alternative to the "shallow and broad" participation of public hearing or survey. They are deeply involved in a process, but ... a narrow segment of the population instead' (Webler, 1992: 222). On the other hand, CACs are the regular forms of consultation bodies where long-time participants on a committee become experts in explaining the issues they discuss, and they take a great amount of commitment in time and effort. The long-time participants become familiar with the consultation process and problems that will be on the agenda for the greater discussions and comments. Thus, a systematic evaluative approach is required to examine advisory committees in order to analyse their consultation process and effectiveness in planning decisions. The objective of the evaluation is to improve the existing consultation process and to form a better participation approach to be adopted by the planning agency. The existing literature indicates that most of the evaluation case studies are on various issues of environmental decision-making (Beierle, 1998, 1999; Webler and Renn, 1995). CACs on environmental decision-making are mainly composed of technical experts and rarely include laypersons on the committee. Planning advisory committees on the other hand, consist of people with diverse interests and include professional and non-professional laypersons, residents,

community groups and interested development proponents. There is a lack of available literature on planning advisory committees and their roles in planning decisions. This study will contribute to the planning literature by investigating the LAPAC consultation process from a case study perspective. Using focus interview techniques, participant observation and document analysis, this study develops a conceptual model that addresses the fairness and effectiveness of the participation process in planning advisory committees.

In the ACT, participation used to occur in various forms including public hearings, opinion polls, consensus conferences and advisory committees. There are advisory committees in the ACT that advise on many issues of interest to the ACT government and its various departments. Some special departments such as the Department of Urban Services (DUS) and its planning component PALM, formed advisory committees known as LAPACs in 1995 to involve community, residents and business people in planning decisions (PALM, 2000b). LAPAC used to meet regularly, but final decisions used to take place within PALM's decision-making process. LAPAC members have reported that they have very little to say about their opinions. Sometimes they are not well informed about the continuing process of any development activities and often their recommendations are not incorporated in the planning decisions. At the same time, LAPACs are concerned about the recruiting of members to the committee, which they believe is undemocratic. People interested in participating in the continuing activities are selected for LAPACs and serve PALM objectives. This researcher has attended several meetings since 1998 and was informed by LAPAC members that the recruiting policy of the LAPAC is not fair and often served PALM's objectives only. Sometimes, committee members are not informed beforehand about changes.

To date the planning advisory committee has attracted very little attention in the planning literature and its effect on local planning decisions has not been systematically evaluated. Day (1997) notes that there was a recession in planning research in the early 1980s when interest in public participation was sidelined, and planners instead focused on issues of strategic planning, economic development and environmental decision-making. Thus, much of the public participation literature tends to concentrate on environmental decision-making and the issues of environmental impact assessments (Grant, 1994). Although concern with public participation in planning did not disappear, it was given



less consideration than the environmental issues (Day, 1997). However, some of the environmental advisory committees, often called environmental advisory groups (EAGs), also deal with urban planning issues at a policy level that integrates planning and environmental issues. Hence, evaluations of planning advisory committees become inevitable in order to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the planning advisory committees, its context and the process of consultation.

This thesis is a critical review of the evaluation approaches of public participation in planning. It suggests the needs to evaluate the broader context of the planning advisory committee and its operational processes. The intent of this thesis is to develop a theoretical framework for evaluating public participation process in planning advisory committees. The existing evaluation criteria are discussed and two meta-criteria are proposed: fairness and effectiveness in evaluating public participation process. The evaluation of the advisory committee consequently leads to developing a conceptual model to improve existing practices. The results of this research may influence the planning agencies in designing future planning advisory committees. Additionally, the results will fill some major gaps in the theoretical literature, such as the criteria for evaluating the fairness and effectiveness of public participation in planning in general and planning advisory committees in particular.

### **1.3 AIM**

The aim of this study is to evaluate public participation processes through planning advisory committees and to develop a conceptual model that is fair and effective.

### **1.4 OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the research is to critically evaluate a planning advisory committee through the proposed meta-criteria of fairness and effectiveness. The sub-objectives are (1) to examine the existing models of evaluating public participation in planning; (2) to evaluate planning advisory committees through the proposed meta-criteria, fairness and effectiveness; (3) to develop a conceptual model in order to address the existing practices in participation; and (4) to assess the application of the evaluative framework for planning advisory committees as a new approach to public participation evaluation in planning literature.

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will make a conceptual contribution to the development of an evaluative framework to examine public participation process in planning through advisory committees. To date there has been no method available for evaluating fairness and effectiveness in public participation in planning. A study of the literature suggests that there has been no study to evaluate whether the participants of the planning advisory committees thought that the exercise was conducted in a fair and effective way, nor to compare the effectiveness with different contexts and situations. This study will provide guidelines for the planning agency to evaluate the existing processes. In addition, the planning agency can compare other consultation techniques and their effectiveness in planning decision-making.

Much public participation research has focused on evaluation of particular involvement techniques (Heberlein, 1976; Checkoway, 1981; Prisco, 1983); however, no single public participation mechanism appears best across all situations (Thomas, 1990). As a complex social phenomenon, public participation is affected by the local context, which may relate to the planning agency and its process, the community and community-based organizations and their expectations from the consultation process. Considering the local context in ACT, the planning advisory committees are more focused on planning and development matters, raising them with the planning agencies on a regular basis. Thus, this research has evaluated CAC techniques and LAPAC has been selected as a case study. The LAPAC consultation process has been evaluated with the framework developed and discussed in Chapter Three.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

### **1.6.1 Research Approach**

The researcher should ensure that the methods used for the study adequately address the research objectives and questions (Creswell, 1994). The focus of this study is on the perceptions of participants about a particular process, and analytical description of their experiences. Thus, analysis of results is exploratory and interpretative based on qualitative descriptions of 'how' and 'why' instead of quantitative analysis such as 'how often' and 'how much'. A case study approach is used to investigate the perspectives of LAPAC members, planning professionals, residents, enthusiastic individuals, community

groups, political parties and others planning community involved in planning and development matters.

### 1.6.2 Qualitative Approach

In a broad sense, the literature provides two main research approaches, qualitative and quantitative (Creswell, 1994). Both approaches have different features at what situation an approach should be used for a study, as they offer different bases for analysing and understanding the facts of a social world. Qualitative research is concerned with explaining 'human environments and human experiences within a variety of conceptual frameworks' (Winchester, 2000: 3-4). In quantitative approach the researcher should remain distant in order to explore the 'reality' of the research. Thus, in surveys and experiments, researchers try to control for bias, to select a systematic sample and to be 'objective' in evaluating a situation (Creswell, 1994). The assumption of the quantitative approach is that there is an 'objective truth', which can be elucidated through scientific method that focuses on systematically and statistically measuring the relationships between variables (Krefting, 1990).

Qualitative research emphasizes no clear-cut objectivity or reality, rather reality is constructed by the individuals involved in the research situations (Creswell, 1998). Thus, 'multiple realities exist in any given situations, as many actors are involved such as researchers, those individuals being investigated and readers or audience interpreting a study' (Creswell, 1994: 5-6). The qualitative researcher needs to report faithfully the observed realities and to rely on explanation and interpretation of informants (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research has a multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive and narrative approach to its subject matter, which underlies the methods used in this current research (see Chapter Four). The qualitative researcher studies things in their natural settings, and attempts to interpret phenomena according to the meanings people bring to them (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The qualitative methods have many advantages in recognizing participants' interpretations, perceived understanding of a process and description of experiences in a particular situation. These advantages are fundamental for evaluating the context and process of a public participation program. A qualitative approach also provides a holistic view of the phenomena being investigated. Thus, a qualitative approach is crucial in obtaining information on residents' and community perspectives, their perceived understanding of the process, and interpretation of criteria

through experiences, which remain invisible in quantitative approaches (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Finally, it can be concluded that the selection of a quantitative or qualitative approach depends on the appropriateness of specific methods for specific problems (Bryman, 1988); so, the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, where appropriate, may strengthen an argument and increase the credibility of research. Krefting (1990) notes that where the context is not well understood and the key problems are well defined, a quantitative methodology may be most appropriate. Where the context is not well understood and it is important to understand the world-view of participants, or the main interest is in process rather than outcome, a qualitative approach may be more useful. Similarly, understanding individual perceptions and their role in the consultation process requires a qualitative approach, with referral where appropriate to existing quantitative data derived from agencies.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is divided into three phases: theoretical, data collection and analysis. Figure 1.1 outlines the issues and relevant themes discussed in each phase.

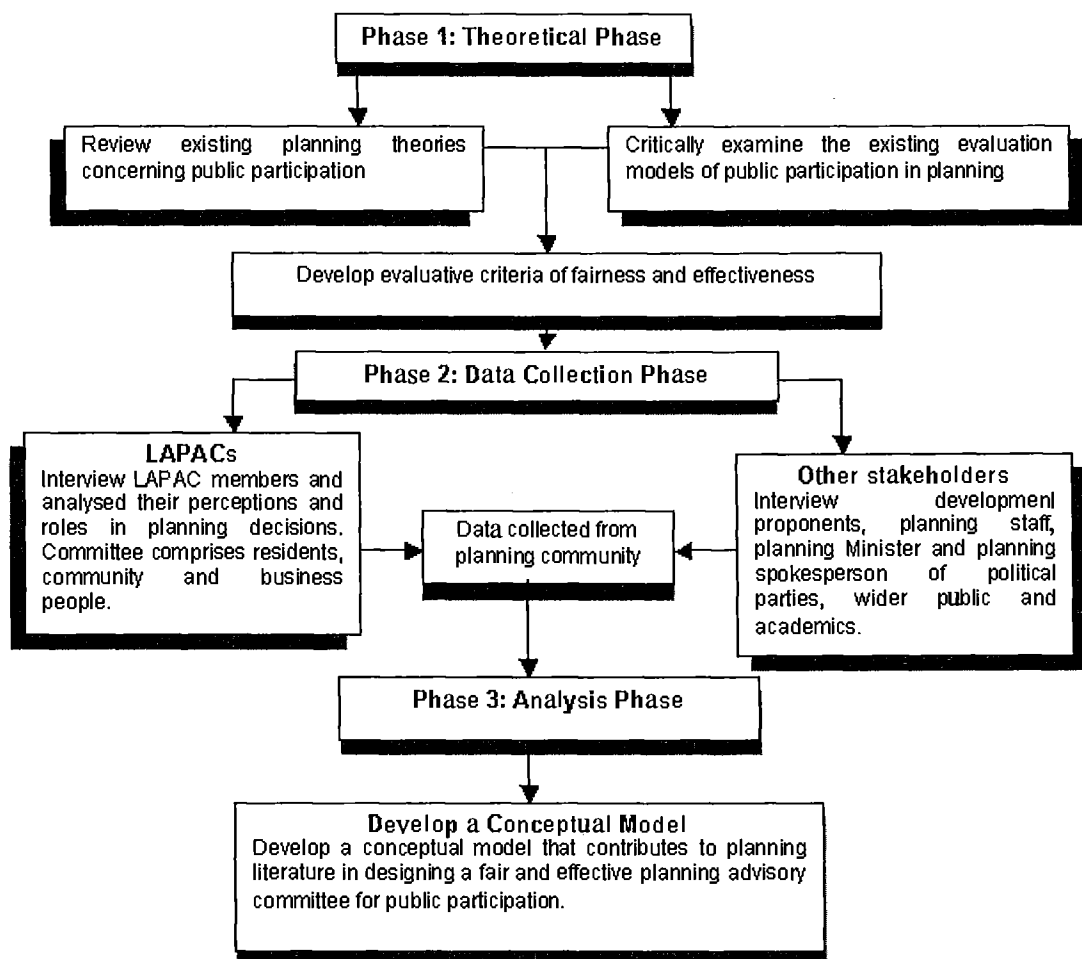
### **1.7.1 Theoretical Phase**

Public participation has attracted researchers in many disciplines, particularly the human sciences of biology, medicine, environment and natural resource management and the social sciences of geography, sociology, political science and planning (Lauber and Knuth, 2000); so the concept of public participation has received interdisciplinary ideas. The theoretical basis of this study is the discussion of many interdisciplinary planning theories and examination of many evaluative models of public participation in planning and the environment.

As mentioned, most of the literature on public participation in planning emerged from the urban renewal projects of the early 1950s, in the form of advisory bodies. However, in the 1980s, the issues of public participation changed to discussion of the environmental decision-making process (Day, 1997; Grant, 1994). There are several models for evaluating public participation and most are based on environmental decision-making

(Webler, 1995). There are few models for evaluating planning issues in an urban setting (Day, 1997; Grant, 1994). The literature indicates that before 1970, there were some initiatives to evaluate public participation in planning (Cole, 1974; Hampton, 1977; Syme and Sadler, 1994). The public participation processes occurred mainly around social issues such as housing, welfare, civil rights and education (Webler, 1992, Sandercock, 1998). After 1970, public participation became increasingly prevalent in environmental management and technological risk-related decision-making (DeSario and Langton, 1987a, 1987b).

Figure 1.1: Structure of the study



This conclusion is based on a study of the evaluation of public participation from 1946 to 1981 (Langton, 1981). Thus, the literature indicates that there was a recession in research on public participation related to planning matters (Day, 1997). Later, Syme and Sadler

(1994) evaluated public participation in water resource planning in Western Australia. However, no such comprehensive literature evaluated planning matters.

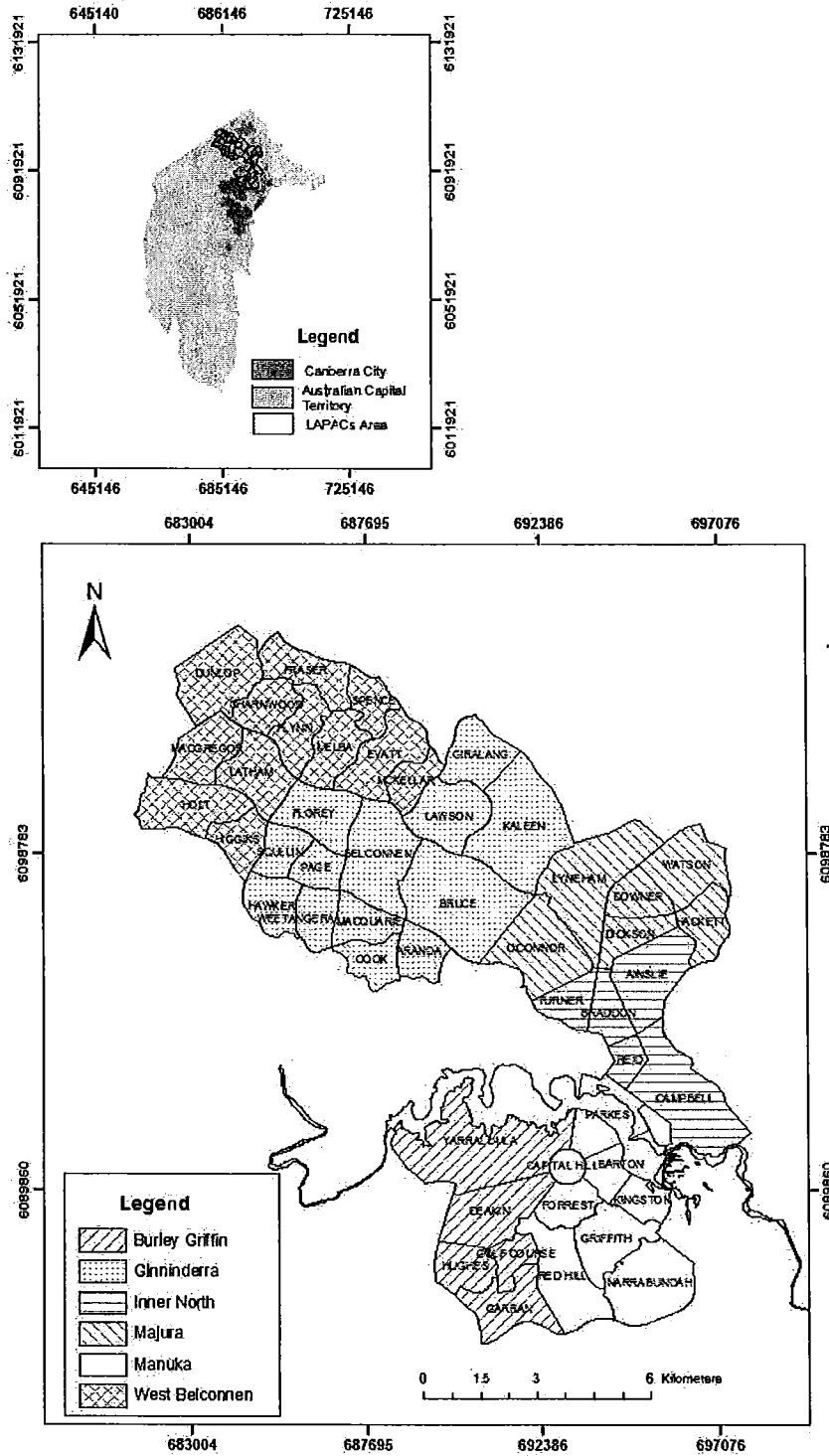
### 1.7.2 Field Work Phase

This study is exploratory and based on the experiences of the participants in the LAPAC consultation process. This research focuses on the perceptions of individuals involved with LAPACs and other planning community in the ACT that influence planning decisions. Consultation with planning advisory committees has been mainly based on issues of urban redevelopment programs to curb urban sprawl, unplanned urban consolidation and infill development in residential areas (Gleeson and Low, 2000; Taylor, 2001b). Urban infill and redevelopment in inner city suburbs in Canberra have contributed to major changes in the image of a garden city (Taylor, 2001b). The urban revitalization programs have been the main concern to all involved in planning decisions in Canberra. In order to get greater community input on urban revitalization programs, the ACT government has established six planning advisory committees in the areas where the redevelopment pressure is high (Figure 1.2). The objective is to obtain community views on urban renewal projects and to incorporate these in the planning decisions. The planning committees consist of residents, community groups and business people, and they give advice on planning and development matters. The advice has been regarded as community influence on planning decisions.

Six LAPACs were chosen for this study (Figure 1.2). Interviews with LAPACs and other planning community were used in combination with an analysis of documentary data. Interviews were conducted with LAPAC members, the wider public in the LAPAC areas, planning staff and planning spokespersons of four political parties. The interviews were semi-structured focus interviews, which allowed face-to-face conversation, and follow-up interviews.

The secondary data were collected from PALM and also from LAPAC agendas and meeting minutes; newspaper articles published in *The Canberra Times*, *The Belconnen Chronicle*, and *The Southside Chronicle* were also used and referred to. The data were analysed through qualitative interpretation, particularly using both narrative and interpretative styles. The data were coded and organized through the qualitative computer software 'Nvivo' and an organizational system of conceptual coding adapted from Tesch

Figure 1.2: Areas of concern for LAPACs



Source: Compiled from DUS (2002)

(1990). The Nvivo software facilitated the organization of interview data and assisted in the analysis of textual data; it helped to structure the textual data into many criteria and sub-criteria proposed in Chapter Three. Details of data collection and analysis are described in Chapter Four.

### 1.7.3 Analysis Phase

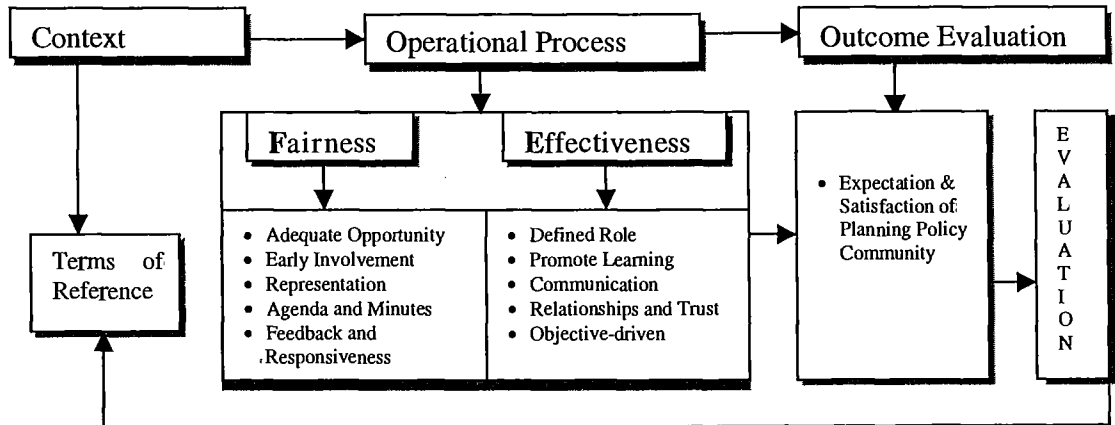
The analysis phase of this research involved an examination of the results in the context of theories and knowledge. It is important to identify where the results support existing theories and where they diverge (Tesch, 1990). The results from this study suggest the development of a universal framework that will guide the existing participation process in planning, and of a conceptual model to ensure the fairness and effectiveness of public participation process.

A conceptual model has been developed for making the public participation process fair and effective, based on the notion of collaborative planning and the theory of collaborative alliance in group decision-making (Gray and Wood, 1991; Sandercock, 1998; Birkeland, 1999; Innes and Booher, 1999a, 1999b, 2000). The model indicates three interdependent factors that need to be in correspondence for a fair and effective participation process. These are *preconditions*, and/or *context*, *process*, and *outcome* evaluations. Innes and Booher (2000) give emphasis to fulfil the preconditions for collaborative planning, which require a fair and effective dialogue by the planning policy community, but the proposed model is based on an evaluation of a consultation process that also requires examining the preconditions of a consultation process before evaluating its existing process, together with the evaluation for possible remedial actions. A careful examination of the literature shows that evaluating public participation is inextricably related to context and process evaluation (Smith, 1979; Webler et al., 1995); it also shows that most public participation studies are carried out on aspects of environmental decision-making that include waste management clean up programs, and environmental impact assessments. There are some examples of evaluating planning issues (Homenuck, 1977); however, to date no study has systematically examined planning advisory committees incorporating the three factors (preconditions and/or context, process, and evaluation) in one model. Only one study so far available has evaluated fourteen advisory committees on environmental policy not related to planning and development matters (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995). The proposed model is shown in Figure 1.3.



The proposed model that comes close to meeting the ideal conditions laid out in the concluding chapter incorporates participation in a much deeper, more inclusive and more meaningful sense than the conventional methods. In the proposed process, the participants in planning advisory committee will learn how to communicate constructively and develop the skills and norms for collaboration; they will provide the civic community

Figure 1.3: A conceptual model for planning advisory committees



with a sense of feeling that captures most of the social values relating to the local residents and others involved in planning decisions. They will develop a sense that they can have an influence through their collaboration and conversation, and will become less alienated as the results are derived from dialogues in consultation process. The concept for this new way of seeing public participation grows from the evidence that effective collaborative understanding and dialogue among people concerned in planning decisions, produce networks that last long after the specific discussion on planning issues, and may generate new dialogues and build networks among themselves to share their common interests on planning and development matters.

The proposed model is based on the assumption that there are well-articulated terms of reference for the participants in a planning advisory committee. All participants agree on the protocols, and their role in the consultation process. The terms of references are strictly followed in the operational process. Thus, a careful evaluation is required of whether the agreed terms of reference are followed and participants are satisfied with the context and operational process. In the proposed model, the essential idea is that planning should be done through face-to-face dialogue with the planning community and those

who have interests in planning and hold a position in the planning advisory committee. To ensure fairness in its operation all participants should have adequate opportunity to speak sincerely and comprehensively in the planning meetings, in order to set the planning agenda and be relevant to planning decisions. It should also be ensured that participants are well informed, receive adequate feedback, communicate well and have an amicable relationship with others involved in planning process. More importantly, the committee should have greater representation from all walks of the community. These participants can include representatives not only of such interests as business, the environment, or local neighbourhoods, but also of many groups, which are not normally part of the planning or policy-making discussions, such as disadvantaged communities or ethnic minorities, aboriginals and immigrants.

To describe the outcomes of a consultation process through planning advisory committees more clearly over a period of time, it can be stated that unfair and ineffective operational processes may lead to disillusionment and cynicism among the participants. In such circumstances, a strategic plan requires evaluating the consultation process to revise the protocols for the planning community. However, most of the evaluation processes normally occur through the planning agency when a new government comes into power with a vision to change its processes and to implement its political promises. This has been reflected in the new government when they came into the power in 2001. The ACT government has significantly changed the existing planning processes for the ACT. These include the introduction of the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA), which replaced PALM in July 2003 and restructuring of LAPACs into smaller segments. The proposed Community Planning Forums (CPFs) will replace LAPACs by the end of 2003. At the time of this thesis submission, the government was working with LAPACs to ensure a smooth transition to CPFs. This has been briefly discussed in Chapter Eight.

## **1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. The principal theme is as outlined in this chapter, to evaluate public participation in planning through the proposed criteria of fairness and effectiveness, evaluated through advisory committees. Chapter Two reviews a broad range of literature on theories propounded to explain public participation in the planning. A review of various approaches in the planning literature is then presented,

followed by a brief description of various forms and a detailed description of the advisory committee and its advantages and disadvantages.

In Chapter Three, a theoretical framework for evaluating the criteria of fairness and effectiveness is discussed. The evaluation of existing models discussed in this chapter provides a basis for developing a theoretical framework to evaluate the LAPAC's consultation process.

The methodology used for this study is explained in Chapter Four; the nature of this study and the appropriateness of methods selected for this research are also explained. Data gathering techniques are discussed, and data analysis procedures are explained with the help of qualitative data analysis software and data presentation styles.

Chapter Five is devoted to description and implementation of five proposed evaluative criteria of fairness: (1) adequate opportunity, (2) early involvement, (3) representation (4) agenda and minutes and (5) feedback and responsiveness. Examples come from LAPAC case studies.

Chapter Six describes and evaluates the proposed five criteria of effectiveness in public participation process: (1) defined role, (2) promote learning, (3) communication, (4) relationships and trust, and (5) objective-driven.

Chapter Seven provides an interpretation and discussion of fairness and effectiveness, as the basis for recommending an ideal process for planning advisory committees. Chapter Eight discusses and summarizes the content of previous chapters and provides new insights for improving consultation through a planning advisory committee. This chapter also illustrates the application of the evaluative framework as a new approach for planning advisory committees. The outcome of this thesis is presented in the form of a conceptual model in response to the research objectives. Wider implications of the research are presented, limitations of the study are identified and areas for further research are recommended.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the existing models of public participation in planning. The review ranges from methods of public participation in planning and approaches to the participation using examples from the available literature, and case studies. The review also includes two sections: the first discusses the definitions of participation and their origin in the planning literature, and methods of public participation; the second section discusses the role of advisory committees in decision-making, and the policy community model as a basis to evaluate the public participation process in planning and development matters.

‘Public participation’ is a broad concept that cannot be covered comprehensively in this thesis, as this concept has received widespread attention in both empirical and theoretical research (Day, 1997; Innes and Booher, 2000; Lauber and Knuth, 2000). It has been a major focus of research in both human-dimensions research such as biology, environment, natural resources and waste management, and social science research such as planning, geography, sociology, and political science (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). A critical review of public participation in planning theories and their influence on planning decisions is presented. This chapter also reviews the ‘policy community model’ (Pross, 1992), which is applied to municipal environmental advisory groups (Filyk and Cote, 1992; Dickinson, 1999). This model adapts to the ‘urban planning policy community’ as a basis for evaluating urban planning advisory committees and their role in planning decisions.

### **2.2 THE CONCEPT OF ‘PARTICIPATION’: ITS ORIGINS IN THE PLANNING LITERATURE**

The theoretical literature on ‘public participation in the planning process seems to be no less cumbersome or untidy than the empirical literature’ (Day, 1997: 422). The existing planning literature is also inundated with many definitions of participation. The widespread use of term the ‘participation’ has tended to mean that any precise, meaningful content has almost disappeared (Pateman, 1970), because ‘participation’ is used by different people to refer to a wide variety of situations (Burke, 1979). In addition,

there are many adjectives before the word 'participation', as in 'community participation', 'citizen participation', 'people's participation', 'public participation', 'public involvement' and 'popular participation' (Mathbor, 1999: 14). These terms are used interchangeably, but in the planning literature the three terms 'community participation', 'public participation' and 'citizen participation' are commonly used. Public participation and citizen participation are mostly popular with the planners, and community participation is mostly used in development literature (Mathbor, 1999: 14).

However, there are differences in meaning between *public participation* and *citizen participation*. Public participation is an act of taking part in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies by interest groups through formal institutions (Yigitcanlar, 2000). Examples of interest groups include many professional and community groups such as residential associations, business associations, trade unions, professional advisory groups and staff associations. Citizen participation, on the other hand, is the direct participation of ordinary citizens in public matters. Citizen participation, however, is distinct from political participation, because citizen participation lays emphasis on the person rather than the state in the participatory relationship. Public participation is not synonymous with citizen participation, mainly because public participation is a wider concept, which may include citizen participation (Yigitcanlar, 2000); the reason is that the word 'public' refers to all people whether or not they possess the rights and obligations of citizenship. Public participation is taken to include citizen participation. Yigitcanlar (2000) notes that public participation in planning is an approach in which citizens are brought to play an active role in the planning decisions.

### 2.2.1 Definition of Participation

As mentioned above 'participation' is a contested concept (Day, 1997), so meaning of participation varies in relation to its applications and definitions. The way that participation is defined also depends on the context in which it occurs. For some, it is a matter of *principles* (Pimbert and Pretty, 1997); for others, *practices* (Davis, 1996); for still others, an *end* (Rahman, 1993). However, there is merit in all these interpretations. Rahnema (1992: 116) notes that 'participation is a stereotype word like children use Lego pieces. Like Lego pieces the words fit arbitrarily together and support the most fanciful

constructions. They have no content, but do serve a function. As these words are separate from any context, they are ideal for manipulative purposes'. Similarly, Arnstein (1969: 216) commented that 'participation is a little like spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you'.

Schatzow (1977: 141) defined participation as 'something that is distinguished from public influence', asserting that participation refers to the involvement of the public in decision-making through a series of formal and informal mechanisms. 'Public participation and decision-making do not necessarily mean that public influence is exerted; public views and opinions may be ignored by decision-makers' (Day, 1997: 493). Instead, 'influence refers to the effect of the public on decision-making, and may operate even when the public does not actually participate in decision-making' (Schatzow, 1977: 142). On the other hand, Arnstein (1969: 216) defined participation as a categorical term for citizen power. 'It is the distribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, currently excluded from political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in future. It is the strategy by which *have-nots* join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parcelled out'. In short, 'it is the means by which they can induce significant social reforms, which enable them to share in the benefits of the affluent society' (Arnstein, 1969: 216).

Therefore, 'participation' is seen as a way of influencing decisions that affect the lives of citizens, and to some extent a way of transferring political power to the 'grassroots' people (Brager et al., 1987). Chambers (1997) sees participation as a process of involving affected communities and interested individuals to participate in decision-making process. He defines participation as 'a process by which people act in response to public concerns, voice their opinions about decisions that affect them and take responsibility for changes to their community' (Chambers 1997: 68). The World Bank's Learning Group on Participatory Development defines participation as 'a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, and the decisions and resources which affect them.' (World Bank, 1995: 3)

Slocum and Thomas-Slatyer (1995: 113) define participation to be '... active involvement

of people in making decisions about the implementation of processes, program and projects which affect them'. The central point of this definition is the belief that ordinary people are capable of producing critical reflections and their place-based local knowledge is relevant and necessary for the decision-making process. Harding (1998) provides a similar definition: 'public participation as the process of involving the affected community in the decision-making process' (Harding, 1998: 108). Harding notes that participation 'may be used to describe a formal process that includes the community in environmental decisions. This may take a variety of forms, for example, public input to a Commission of Inquiry, or public comment on an exhibited Environmental Impact Statement' (Harding, 1998: 109).

Whilst many use 'public participation' to cover a range of interactions between two typologies: 'consultation' and 'empowerment', there are differences in the meanings of both typologies (Buchy and Hoverman, 1999). 'Consultation' is presented as a process of involvement in which people's opinion is sought, may influence the perspective, but in no way guarantees an input in decision-making (Buchy and Hoverman 1999: 9). It has also been described as 'sharing of information but not necessarily of power' (Sarkissian et al., 1997). When people are consulted before the preparation of a new project, their opinion is more likely to be incorporated than if they are asked to comment on pre-determined projects. On the other hand, 'empowerment' reflects more a state of personal development, a state of mind through which people learn, increase their self-esteem and confidence, and are better able to use their own resources (Chambers, 1997); they can see that their opinion is rational and has been taken into account.

Therefore, public participation is required in order to ensure that the aspirations and needs of citizens are taken into account by the decision-makers, as the 'people are now emerging with the voice of community right to be heard and community right to affect decisions' (Harding, 1998: 113). The modern educational and democratic norms are now very important in making people aware of their rights to participate in a program that may directly or indirectly affect them. There are numerous models to involve the public in the planning process. Since 1950, people have become involved in planning decisions, particularly in 'urban renewal projects' (Day, 1997). Governments and their planning agencies have introduced various techniques and methods to involve the possibly affected

community and enthusiastic individuals in the decision-making process. The most popular techniques 'were public hearings and only selected individuals in the form of advisory groups' (Day, 1997: 495). Innes and Booher (2000: 1) criticised these methods and provided a thorough overview of traditional methods: 'traditional methods of public participation in government decision-making simply do not work. They do not achieve genuine participation in planning or decisions; they do not provide significant information to public officials that makes a difference to their actions; they do not satisfy members of the public that they are being heard; they do not improve the decisions that agencies and public officials make; and they do not represent a broad spectrum of the public'. Birkeland (1999: 113) comments that 'urban planning is often depicted as the "top-down" imposition of an ordered environment by technocratic planners and the "solution" is to achieve more genuine forms of bottom-up community participation in the evaluation of urban development proposals'. Innes and Booher (2000) also advocate a 'bottom-up' approach within the framework of the collaborative planning process.

The planning literature indicates that there is a potential to create a collaborative approach to planning decisions by planning stakeholders, which will require a collaborative participatory approach by the planners to the execution of their duties and to the needs of society (Gray and Wood, 1991; Sandercock, 1998; Birkeland, 1999; Innes and Booher, 1999a, 1999b, 2000). The public should realize that individually or through interest groups, they should participate in public matters that may affect them, with a view to persuading planning agencies to promote their particular interests by changing public policy on specific matters. Everyone also has to realize that public participation can shape the broad policies of local governments, and its effects on routine policy decisions could be maximal (Sandercock, 1998). The following section discusses theories of public participation and the main features of public participation in collaborative planning.

### **2.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING THEORIES**

Over the last 50 years many competing models of planning theories for public participation have been developed (Sandercock, 1998; Birkeland, 1999; Innes and Booher, 1999a, 1999b, 2000). Many of the planning theories on which the participation models are based overlap, and all continue to be used in present-day planning practices



(Sandercock, 1998). Innes and Booher (1999b) identify four schools of planning thought and explore how each school approaches the issues of public participation. These schools are: technocratic, political, social movement and collaborative participatory planning (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1: Four models of planning and policy-making**

	Low	Diversity	High
Interdependence of Interest	Low	Technical/Bureaucratic	Political influence
		Convening	Co-opting
	High	Social Movement	Collaborative
		Converting	Co-evolving

Source: Inner and Booher (1999b)

Another list of public participation models under various planning theories was summarized by Birkeland (1999), and contains four competing models of public participations in planning process. These include (1) technocratic, (2) liberal, (3) radical and (4) eco-centric bioregional through collaborative approach (Table 2.1). However, this study summarizes planning theories under four headings based on the nature and manifestation of planning theories in the participation process: participation in comprehensive planning; in incremental planning; in advocacy planning; and in collaborative planning.

**Table 2.1: Summary of participatory planning models**

Planning Theories	Participation Models	Approaches
Comprehensive	Technocratic	Top-down
Incremental	Liberal	Non-planning
Advocacy	Radical	Bottom-up
Bioregional	Eco-centric	Collaborative

Source: Adapted from Birkeland (1999: 114)

### **2.3.1 Participation in Comprehensive Planning**

The public participation in comprehensive planning approach is a version of the 'techno-bureaucratic' or 'top-down' model (Birkeland, 1999; Innes and Booher, 1999b). In this model, planning consists of assessing possible alternative goals, developing comparative analysis, recommending to decision-makers a course of action, later assessing the effects of policies and suggesting possible changes (Innes and Booher, 2000). This planning process typically depends on scientific information and quantitative data modelling. Planners believe that there is a truth 'out there' which they are the best qualified to uncover through their analytical skills. Public participation in this model is regarded by the planners as something to meet the obligations of planning laws (Sandercock, 1998; Birkeland, 1999; Kaufman, 1999).

Therefore, participation in this model means 'consultation' or 'input' to planning and development approval systems, while planners or technical experts determine the planning decisions on what is best for the possibly affected community (Sandercock, 1998). Comprehensive planning assumes that an optimal result for the community can be objectively determined, and that planning decisions flow directly from information. However, planners in comprehensive planning may also regard consultation as a useful way to better understand community goals and values, and to fill gaps in what has been formally adopted by any Legislative Assembly for its objectives (Innes and Booher, 2000; Sandercock, 1998). Some planners may see the consultation process as simply a waste of time, and believe that the community has little to contribute to their highly acclaimed planning work which often comes with high-quality architectural designs and plans. In some cases, such technical planners may take local knowledge from the community, but look with much scepticism on 'anecdotal' evidence that comes from the public (Webler, 1995; Sandercock, 1998). For the technical planner, 'public participation is something that may be needed at the beginning of a process to determine goals and toward the end of the process to help make the final choice of a plan or strategy' (Innes and Booher, 2000: 15).

### **2.3.2 Public Participation in Incremental Planning**

By the end of the 1960s, the limitations of comprehensive planning were evident (Gunton, 1984). A key element came from the Chicago Housing Authority by Banfield

(1961) who argued that planning practice was different from the theory of planning. The theory of comprehensive planning was not a rational activity governed by experts using scientific knowledge, but an irrational process dominated by petty political concerns (Gunton, 1984). Sometimes, decisions are taken by high-level officials instead of professional planners; Innes and Booher (1999b) call this approach 'political influence planning'. They note that typically in this model a plan is made up of projects, each of which is desired by a politically important person. For instance, a political leader or political party may select an extension route to connect the city with urban conurbation, which may benefit a political party in general, and a political leader in particular.

A vital element of public participation in incremental planning is a pluralistic view of a society composed of competing interest groups who lobby government for certain policies (Sandercock, 1998). In this model, planning decisions are not made by a strict process but by a series of consultations; thus decisions are made incrementally through a series of smaller decisions (Gunton, 1984), in order to 'minimize the risk of big mistakes by making marginal and tentative adjustments in decision or approach' (Birkeland, 1999: 121). This is the theory of Lindblom (1959) who described it as 'partisan mutual adjustment' or 'disjointed incrementalism' (Faludi, 1973). Over time, incremental choices form a decision-tree: at each branch, the planning decisions may be rational, but taken as a whole they may not be, as people could end up out on a limb (Birkeland, 1999: 116).

In this model of planning, broad public participation is undesirable, if not actually a threat to the whole planning system (Sandercock, 1998). This type of planning works 'behind the scenes with the "fixer" making deals with powerful players one by one. It does not deal with the people who are not politically important to the political leaders; rather it gives importance to the voters' (Innes and Booher, 2000: 14). Innes and Booher (1999b) note that this kind of deal-making does not bear public scrutiny, even when there is nothing illegal about it, since it violates the social norms of fairness and equal opportunity for all participants in the consultation process. Innes and Booher (1999b) also observe that public participation in this model often happens after the deals or preliminary decisions have been made. The public may then have the opportunity to comment on a decided proposal, though it is unlikely that basic changes will be made. Indeed, it is this deal-making component that is behind much of the impression the public often gets that

participation is merely for window-dressing, as opposed to being designed to get greater community input into the planning decisions. Often the community regards this process as illegitimate and unfair; they believe the decision has already been made before the beginning of public consultation with the affected community. Sandercock (1998) notes that this model is the biggest obstacle to genuine public participation in decision-making process. When 'this model is teamed up with the technical approach, meaningful public participation can be almost entirely locked out' (Innes and Booher, 2000: 16).

### **2.3.3 Public Participation in Advocacy Planning**

A third model of planning gives a voice to marginalized communities who often feel disenfranchised from participating in decision-making (Innes and Booher, 2000). Beginning with the 'War on Poverty' in the 1960s, some planners and architects began to realize that 'ghetto dwellers' had life styles (Wear, 1996). It was believed that these people should be mobilized by having a voice in and contributing substantively to programs that affected their destiny, rather than being allowed to participate as a means to obtain their cooperation (Burke, 1979). The aim of the 'War on Poverty' was to provide adequate civic amenities to poor slum-dwellers, providing an opportunity for advocacy planners and design agencies to incorporate people's perceptions of their lives and to improve their livelihood. Inspired by many social movements (Innes and Booher, 2000) to improve the lives of slum-dwellers during the 1960s, the advocacy planners sought to give these disadvantaged communities a voice in landuse planning which greatly affected their lives. This planning model is also known as bottom-up planning (Birkeland, 1999).

Public participation under this planning model means that advocacy planners try to empower a community by providing technical support and political advice, without imposing their own values, decisions or strategies on their client groups (Forester, 1999). Advocacy planners worked to overcome class, language and cultural barriers to assist under-represented community groups in communicating with technocrats and negotiating with administrators (Birkeland, 1999: 128). The essence of this model is that individuals and groups who are not in the power structure join together for some common purpose because the only way they can have an influence is through their number. In this process, the community takes an active role in planning and designs through hands-on involvement, rather than 'consultation' (Sanoff, 2000). Many advocacy planners are part

of this process, whether formally or not, and pursue their mission in their planning activities, for non-government organizations or planning agencies, or even in consulting practices. But often advocacy planners are volunteers working in their free time (Sanoff, 2000).

Whether the advocate works outside the planning agencies or inside government organizations, the objective is to improve participation or, at least, reduce the power differences between vested interest and community groups, rather than to change the decision-making systems fundamentally (Forester, 1999).

#### **2.3.4 Participation in Collaborative Planning**

By definition, 'collaborative planning is a process in which interested parties, often with widely varied interests, work together for a common solution' (Gay, 1989: 5). In the collaborative model, the essential idea is that planning should be done through face-to-face dialogue among those who have interests in the results. For this dialogue to work effectively, Innes and Booher (2000: 18) identify six pre-conditions for a participation process: (1) the full range of interests of the 'planning community' must be involved; (2) the dialogue must be authentic that people must be able to speak sincerely and comprehensibly to each other; that what they say must be accurate and that they must speak as legitimate representatives of a stakeholder's interest; (3) there must be both diversity and interdependence among the collaborators; (4) all issues must be on the table for discussion with nothing off-limits; (5) everyone in the discussion must be equally informed, equally listened to and thus empowered as members of the collaborative discussion; and (6) agreements are only reached when consensus is achieved among the vast majority of participants and only after substantial serious effort has been made to satisfy the interest of all those involved.

Innes and Booher (2000) note that the above conditions are closely related to the ideas of Susskind et al., (1999) and Habermas (1987). However, most of the pre-conditions have been discussed by Webler (1995) in his theory of fairness and competence in citizen participation in environmental decision-making. In this collaborative model, participants jointly develop their own objectives and purposes, structure their interests and preferences for all to understand, develop a shared understanding of a planning problem and

agreement on what they need to do, and then work through a series of tasks which lead to actions or agreements that all, or most, believe will improve their ability to meet their own interests and improve the collective welfare. The participants reach these results, not by argument, but by cooperative scenario building, information and experience. All members have to create new strategies that can often release the group from some impasse that would otherwise have prevented action (Innes and Booher, 1999a). Innes and Booher (1999a) also argue that traditional participation methods are not particularly satisfactory for many of their purposes, and point out that the collaborative planning process that comes close to meeting the ideal conditions set out above incorporates participation in a much deeper, more inclusive and more meaningful sense than the conventional methods. To achieve those goals requires establishing a collaborative network paradigm with the planning stakeholders (Innes and Booher, 1999a). Innes and Booher (2000) also comment that the collaborative approach is the only method of planning and public involvement that would be sufficiently flexible, responsive and adaptive to be effective in the uncertain and rapidly changing environment of the turn of the twenty-first century (Innes and Booher, 2000: 14).

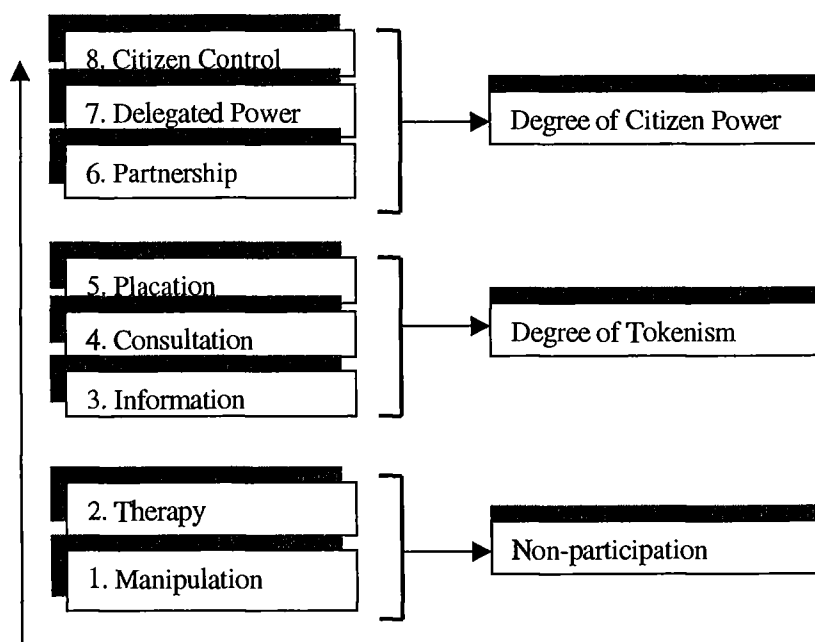
### *Approaches to Public Participation*

Numerous authors have advocated public participation as a way to allow citizens to pursue their own interests, desires, and preferences. Pateman (1970: 14) argued that 'participation is for the protection of ... private interest'. Therefore, the role of the government is to help citizens fulfil their interests and wishes (Fiorino, 1990). The following sections explore how planning agencies may constructively incorporate public participation into the planning process. There is no doubt that organizing consultation events is a management approach (Lauber and Knuth, 2000); in such management, it is imperative to understand at what level citizens are involved in decision-making, and what degree of power they have in the consultation process.

Arnstein's (1969) 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation' is an oft-cited reference on participation in planning (Figure 2.2); it identified eight different rungs of participation based on power in actual decision-making authority. For Arnstein (1969: 217) 'citizen participation is power, specifically the redistribution of power that enables those citizens who "have-not"'. It follows that participation without redistribution of power is both

empty and frustrating’.

Figure 2.2: Eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation



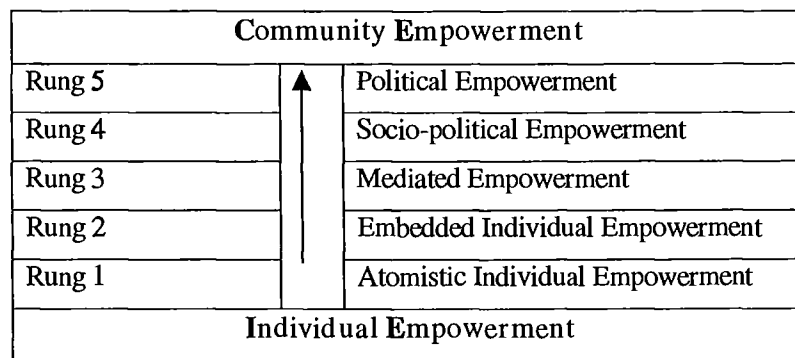
Source: Arnstein (1969: 217)

The eight rungs are arranged with an increasing level of power. These eight categories of power fall into three main groups, with the first ‘Non-participation’, where ‘... the real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to “educate” or “cure” the participants’ (Arnstein, 1969: 217). The group describes varying degrees of tokenism where the ‘have-nots’ are allowed to hear and to have a voice, but are not afforded the power to ensure their views are heard, nor given the right to decide (Arnstein, 1969: 217). With increasing citizen power, further up the ladder, the degree of decision-making power ‘is transferred from the “power-holders” to the citizens, providing opportunities for negotiation, formulation of trade-offs and full managerial power’ (Arnstein, 1969: 217).

Arnstein’s ladder has been criticized, as ‘it carries a value judgment that some methods are intrinsically more valuable than others’ (Byrne and Davis, 1998: 13); it is also criticized as ‘too idealistic, and almost impossible to achieve the top part of the ladder’ (Kaufman, 1999: 134). Twenty-eight years after Arnstein, Rocha (1997) presented

another ladder of participation (Figure 2.3). While there are similarities between these two typologies, there are two significant differences on which Heckman (1999) commented. First, Rocha's typology is based on 'classification of power experiences, which itself is based on the source of power and the object (or target) of power; this contrasts with Amstein's interpretation of power (in the classic ... sense that power is the ability to affect the behaviour of another to do something they would not otherwise do). Second, in Amstein's ladder the rungs shared the same locus, that of the community; in Rocha's typology the locus varies from individual to community' (Heckman, 1999: 14).

Figure 2.3: A ladder of empowerment



Source: Rocha (1997: 35)

The point of these two typologies, or similar conceptual schemes proposed by others, is that there are different approaches of participation and empowerment, each with different goals, purposes and methods. The different approaches might be more effective, or are more likely to be found, in different decision-making and planning contexts or processes (Heckman, 1999). Chase et al., (2000: 213) outlined a similar range of approaches to public participation:

*Expert Authority Approach:* Agencies retain full responsibility for management decisions and do not consider citizen input during the decision-making process.

*Passive-Receptive Approach:* Agencies consider citizen input, but do not actively seek it. Those citizens who have input in decision making are those who take the initiative to contact agencies.

*Inquisitive Approach:* Agencies make systematic attempts to gather citizen input through



public meetings, surveys or other methods. The agencies decide how to weigh this input as they make policy decisions.

*Transactional Approach:* Agencies facilitate a process in which citizens work together to try to reach agreement on the best management decision. Thus, citizens help decide how to weigh different stakeholder's perspectives in decision-making.

*Co-management Approach:* Stakeholders are involved not just in decision-making, but also throughout the management process. Under other approaches, agencies specify a particular and limited role for other stakeholders. Under co-management, agencies work in partnership with local government, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. Together they decide the appropriate role each stakeholder should play in the management process.

Chase et al., (2000) argue that these five approaches form a logical continuum in which the relative influence of citizens and agencies on management varies, from total agency control under the expert authority approach to broad power-sharing under co-management.

#### ***Purposes of Public Participation***

A number of purposes have been advanced for public participation in planning and policy decision-making. Glass (1979) identified five purposes of public participation in planning decisions: (1) information exchange among planning stakeholders; (2) education for the residents and community groups to make informed comments on planning proposals; (3) support building; (4) supplemental decision-making; and (5) representational input in the decision-making process. Innes and Booher (2000: 5-6) outlined another list of four major purposes of the participation in planning; it is more-or-less similar to that of Glass (1979).

The first is simply for decision makers to acquire information about community preferences so they can play a part in the decision-making process about projects, policies or plans: public participation is designed to help ensure that the people's will is given consideration in planning decisions.

The second purpose is to improve the decisions that are made by incorporating the knowledge of the public into the realms of decision-making. Thus, it may be that the people in a local community know about the traffic or crime problems on a particular street, and the planners and decision-makers can learn about this through public involvement in decision-making. Both first and second purposes are increasingly important for the planning agency, as the agency gets larger and more impersonal and more distant from its constituencies.

The third purpose of public participation generally concerns fairness and justice. There are reasons why the disadvantaged group's needs and preferences are likely to be unrecognized through the normal analytical procedures and information sources of bureaucrats, legislative officials and planners: these needs may only come to the planner's knowledge when an open public participation process occurs. So public participation gives at least the opportunity to hear people who were overlooked or misunderstood in the early stages.

A fourth purpose of public participation is getting legitimacy for public decisions. If a planner can say 'We held a dozen public hearings and reviewed hundreds of comments and everyone who wanted to had a chance to say his piece,' then whatever they decide to do is, at least in theory, democratic and therefore legitimate (Innes and Booher, 2000: 6). Public participation may be to build support for plans among the public as well. Finally, 'public participation is something planners and public officials do because the law requires them to' (Innes and Booher, 2000: 6).

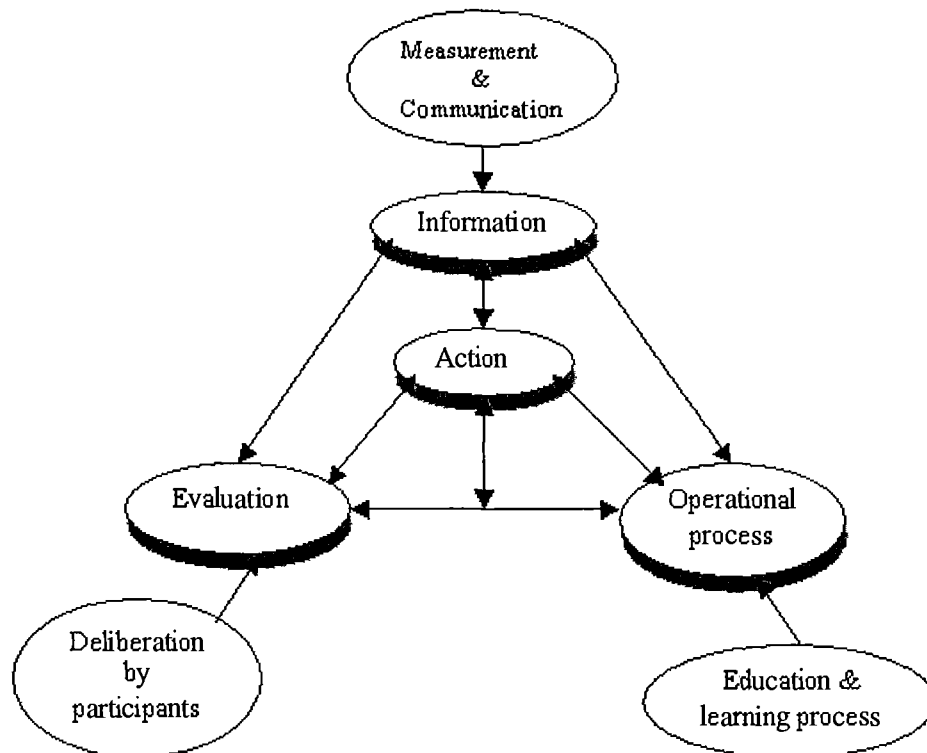
### ***Public Participation Processes***

The purposes of public participation discussed above have certain type of processes that contribute to the planning decisions (Figure 2.4). When planning agencies attempt to gather information about citizens to inform decision-makers, they rely on processes that involve measurement, such as mail and telephone surveys and soliciting feedback at public meetings (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). When the public try to provide information to decision-makers, they are faced with the task of effective communication to managers. When public participation is used to improve judgement, the public are incorporated in a process of deliberation, and discussion of the merits of different planning options. Lauber and Knuth (2000) notes that if the management of operational process is the target of

participation activities, some type of transformation of people is the purpose, whether a transformation of their perspectives, their behaviours, their relationships, or their capacity. Education of the relevant participants in the planning process can lead to personal transformation of individuals or groups. All these processes can contribute to decision-makers willingness to implement planning actions (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). Thus, participation process is a continuous learning process for the participants in order to make an informed comment on the proposals.

In many public participation programs, multiple goals and multiple processes are used to achieve these goals. Planners may want to gather input, involve the public in deliberating about the best action to take, and build support within a community for whatever action is chosen (Beierle, 1998). In such cases, the goals and the processes used to achieve them may overlap. For example, a public meeting may be used both to gather input and to educate the community about each other's perspectives (Sarkissian et al., 1997; Beierle, 1998), so a single public participation strategy may be able to meet multiple goals.

Figure 2.4: Relationship between public participation processes and outcomes



Source: Adapted from Lauber and Knuth (2000: 13)

Nevertheless, separating public participation goals and processes conceptually can help to clarify purposes for public participation efforts. This public participation process takes various forms of public participation, and each of those forms may have different types of process and outcome goals (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). The following section discusses the various forms of public participation.

## **2.4 VARIOUS FORMS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The principal elements of public participation are the methods used, and most importantly the behaviour and attitudes of those who facilitate it. Numerous methods are commonly used by the government to allow public input into the planning process: Table 2.2 describes various forms of participation strategies commonly used in government agencies. The forms, discussed in Table 2.2, have their own levels of participation as well as different effects on the policy planning. Discussion of various forms of participation is beyond the scope of this thesis, because its aim is to evaluate planning advisory committees, thus discussion on participation has been confined to a particular technique: that of Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC).

### **2.4.1 Citizen Advisory Committees**

A citizen advisory committee, which represents a particular community or neighbourhood, is also a form of participation. Public participation can be ensured through a form of elected advisory committee comprising people from all walks of life; it may include residential, environmental and business groups, labour unions, and agency staff as well as citizen groups (Thomas, 1995). Thomas (1995) observes that an advisory committee is not a form of deliberative democracy but a type of 'republican' form of public involvement in participation, restricted to a small number of community representatives who are expected to represent the interests of the larger community. In the United States, the establishment of advisory committees sprang from initiatives such as the 'War on Poverty' during the 1960s and 1970s, to advise on various programs such as affordable housing for poor urban dwellers, and improving their lives. Advisory committees can also be formed to advise in the decision-making of governments or any organizations on planning issues. In Australia, political pressure by democratic interests from the 1970s helped to secure a number of reform initiatives in planning legislation and

**Table 2.2: Public participation strategies**

Forms of Participation	Definition
Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC)	People are selected by an institutional body based on representation of major interest positions, but not the full range of interests for logistical reasons.
Public Hearing	People are invited to present their concerns before a lawful committee that may comprise planning officials and lawmakers.
Workshop	A process to gather community and stakeholders' input into a process that requires planning initiatives, which the agency thinks it important to incorporate.
Survey	Similar to workshop, the target people are identified to solicit their concerns about possible changes and satisfaction over the existing process and outcomes.
Citizen Taskforce	A process whereby a group is formed to devise equitable outcomes on planning issues to be considered.
Planning Cell	People are selected from a random pool of citizens to evaluate.
Citizen Jury	People are selected from a random pool of the public to evaluate policy alternatives.
Citizen Panel	A process that selects enthusiastic individuals to give policy level input into the decision-making process.
Consensus Conference	People are selected from among expert to make comments mostly on scientific and technological aspects.
Deliberative Poll	People are selected randomly by telephone numbers and then come together to discuss the issues, thereby building in a deliberative component.
Public Participation GIS	People are selected to shape, reshape, and make alternative to their own areas of concern on planning and environmental aspects. It is also be possible through the Internet.

Source: Adapted from Jankowski and Nyerges (2001: 30)

practice that sought to improve public participation mechanisms (Gleeson and Low, 2000). Stein (1998) notes that the New South Wales *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, for example, enhanced the opportunities for public participation in that state's planning process. In the ACT, the Territory Plan 1993 requires community advisory committees under section 32 for consultations on planning and development matters (PALM, 2000a: 4). Accordingly, many government agencies formed advisory committees to give advice and recommendations to the government's planning initiatives on many development projects. The advisory committee ranges from technical experts' panels to laypersons giving advice on many issues as community input. However, the literature indicates that most of the CACs are formed to deal with issues related to environmental decision-making (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995).

Lynn and Busenberg (1995) summarize fourteen empirical studies of advisory committees that deal with environmental issues (Table 2.3). The summary includes only one case study (Hannah and Lewis, 1982) that discusses delivery of human services, dealing with a number of planning aspects. However, there is no literature available on planning and development matters within a form of planning advisory committee. Mostly, public participation literature has the broader basis of environmental aspects (James, 1999), which include planning and development matters. There are many advisory committees in Australian cities dealing with the issues of environment, conservation, parks, open-space management, and planning and development matters together. Only in the ACT the advisory committees, LAPACs, deal with planning and development matters, not within the framework of environmental aspects. The ACT has a separate advisory committee namely Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) that deals with environmental aspects only (Environment ACT, 1999).

Advisory committees differ from other public participation techniques, as discussed above, 'an advisory committee is a relatively small group of people who are convened by a sponsor for an extended period of time to represent the ideas and attitudes of various groups and/or communities for the purpose of examining a proposal, issue, or set of issues' (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995: 148). What distinguishes an advisory committee from other techniques, such as public hearings or surveys depends on the interaction between interested citizens and government representatives. Unlike such citizen bodies at

Table 2.3: Overview of studies of advisory committees

Authors	Types of CAC	Organizations advised	Issues considered	Study methods
Priscoffi (1978)	CAC involved in water resource planning	River Basin Commission	Flood plain management, irrigation, and wetlands	Multiple case studies
Pierce and Doerksen (1976)	CAC created by water resource department	State department of ecology	Water resource planning,	Survey-based studies, 120 people interviews from 5 CACs
Hannah and Lewis (1982)	Locally initiated CAC	City departments	City planning, and environmental concerns	Survey based studies: questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation
Stewart et al., (1984)	Air quality planning	Government and Governor	Clean air ACT	Individual case study and direct observation
Lynn (1987)	Hazardous waste management	City Council	Risk assessment of hazardous waste management	Multiple case studies; interviews and document analysis
Nelson (1990)	Agricultural and environmental interests	State	Soil erosion, wetlands and farmland protection	Individual case study; document analysis of meeting minutes and agreements
Ross and Associates (1991)	Hazardous Waste Advisory Council	State Government	Regional hazardous waste management system	Participate observation, and document analysis
Scrimgeour and Hanson (1993)	Site specific Advisory bodies	Department of environment	Clean up of sites; hazardous materials and radioactive waste	Multiple case studies; interviews with sponsors; document analysis
Dickinson (1999)	Policy level environmental advisory bodies	Municipal council	Flora and Fauna, conservation and natural environment	Individual case study, interviews, and document analysis
Tuler and Webler (1999)	Tasks-level advisory committee	Forest department	Forest resource conservation	Semi-structured interviews, document analysis and participant observations

Source: Adapted from Lynn and Busenberg (1995: 149-150)

the expert and policy levels, advisory committees are not traditionally given final decision-making powers (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995). Expert and policy-level advisory committees are more influential than other tasks-level advisory committees.

There is little difference between a task force and an advisory committee, and the two terms are often used interchangeably (Beierle, 1998). Some literature on public participation treats task forces differently from advisory committees, pointing out that an advisory committee is usually larger, longer-lived, and better suited to the consideration of a broad range of issues than a task force. A task force tends to focus on one discrete issue on an *ad hoc* basis (Rosener, 1978b; Creighton, 1986, 1993). On the other hand, citizen juries and citizen panels are also both distinct from advisory committees. These two types of advisory bodies, which have also been concerned with public agencies, are usually selected randomly from the population of a region, meet for short periods (usually 3-5 months), and generally limit their deliberations to one issue (Crosby et al., 1986: 173).

The public join advisory committees to perform a variety of tasks in many contexts (Webler, 1992). Some are project-specific, such as committees formed by nuclear clean-up programs (Landre and Knuth 1993a), local government for environmental and planning (Lynn and Busenberg, 1995), and water resource planning (Syme and Sadler, 1994). Therefore, advisory committees have different types of benefits and limitations in order to receive a wide range of advice in the decision-making process. Webler (1992) notes that committee members on environment issues are chosen from a diverse background of professional and lay individuals, such as farmers, doctors, land developers, environmentalists, business people, teachers, politicians and clergy. During the tenure of advisory committees, members are encouraged to return to their 'constituencies' and receive feedback; thus a sort of representativeness is established. Thus, advisory committees perform a liaison service between the project implementing authority and the community (Harding, 1998).

However, some authors are critical of the advisory committee for not being an open and fair form of public participation, as selected members of a committee may be acting with vested interests rather than in the interest of the community (Smith, 1993; Birkeland,



1999; Beder, 1999). A further criticism of advisory committees is that the proponents may form them in order to 'win' the support of neighbourhood and community groups. More in the past than the present, proponents have commonly established committees as a means to 'educate' the community, labelling it 'public participation' even when there was no effective input to discussion from the community members (Beder, 1999). Also, advisory committees can become 'buffers' between the community and organizations implementing the planning decisions. Creighton (1993) and Thomas (1995) suggest several unique benefits that an advisory committee can offer to an agency, they identify many benefits and limitations. Listed below are several of these.

### Benefits

- Consensus decision may be reached quickly through an advisory committee rather than through other approaches, such as public meetings, or separate negotiations with concerned groups.
- It encourages thinking by any committee member on behalf of the larger communities, rather than only as a representative of a participation interest.
- It serves as an excellent vehicle for building public acceptance of a decision.
- It allows public participation at a procedural stage when no preliminary decisions have already been taken.
- It serves as a communication link to the constituents represented by the advisory committee, and as a means for building consensus among conflicting groups.

### Limitations

- There is no assurance that the public will accept that the advisory group speaks on its behalf.
- The desire to have all viewpoints means that some will be under-represented and others over-represented when compared to broader public opinion.
- Advisory groups may become elitist or lose touch with their constituencies, increasing the danger that the general public will not support the group's recommendations or subsequent agency actions.
- Community members could unite in opposition to agency goals or quality requirements, producing a recommendation at odds the managers' intentions. The

local community can reject the scientific standards that need to be incorporated in the planning process.

- Advisory committees can most effectively be used with regard to local problems, or problems where only a few, well-defined groups are affected.
- The advisory committee does not provide for the hiring of independent experts by the public.

In evaluating advisory committees, importance should also be given to others who are involved in planning decisions and share similar information with advisory committees (Gleeson and Low, 2000). How their interactions affect the planning decisions should also be examined. How do they share common information and interpret it for rational application to the planning initiatives? The planners, who interact with the advisory committee during the consultation process, have similar roles in the planning decision-making process. Pross (1992) has developed a policy community model for giving a broader context to the concept of 'stakeholders'. The policy community model could be translated into what Gleeson and Low (2000) termed a 'planning community' concept. The following sections discuss the policy community model, which illustrates the role of various stakeholders and their influence in decision-making. This study has adopted the 'policy community model' and applied it to the 'urban planning policy community'.

## **2.5 ADOPTING THE POLICY COMMUNITY MODEL IN PLANNING**

Pross (1992) outlined the concept of the 'policy community', which he defined as 'a cluster of interest groups, associated agencies, interests and/or informed individuals around the agencies generally considered to be key actors in a specific field of government activity' (Pross, 1992: 119). A conceptual diagram of the policy community model is shown in Figure 2.5. Pross (1992: 119) outlined another concept, 'policy network': that refer to 'the relationship among the particular set of actors that forms around an issue of importance to the policy community'. He explains that policy networks are composed of like-minded people within the policy community (Pross, 1992). However, the network members may cross the boundaries of 'policy communities' and may establish communications with other interested proponents on the same issues they are dealing with. The network is composed of many government policy-implementing

agencies, pressure groups, community groups, media people, individuals and academics, who have an interest in a particular policy field and attempt to influence those policies (Pross, 1992). Pross (1992) divided the people in the policy community into two groups *vis-à-vis* the sub-government and the attentive public.

### 2.5.1 The Sub-government

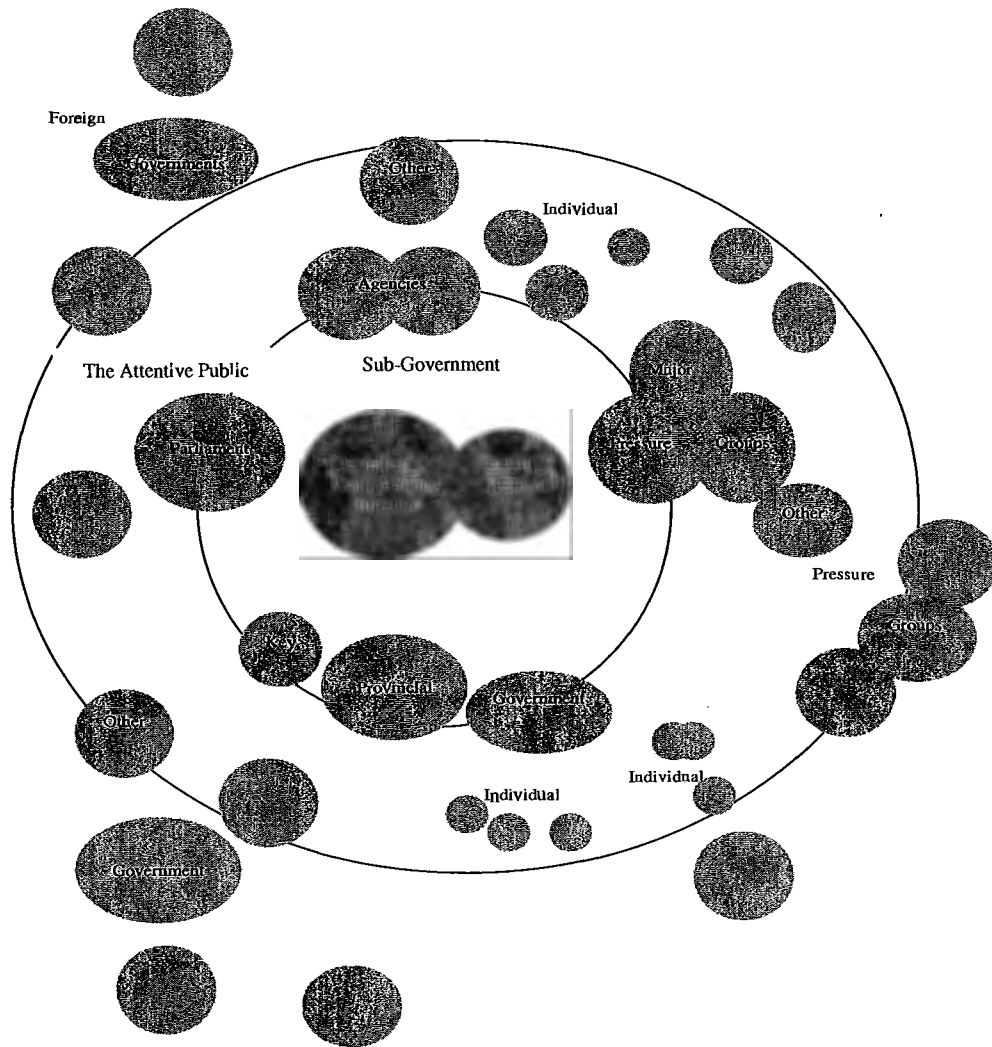
The sub-government consists of a very small group of individuals that may include the Minister in charge of the policy-implementing agency, senior officials responsible for this field, and state or federal representatives of the few interest groups whose opinions and support for implementing government policies are essential (Pross, 1992). These interest groups can contribute in the policy planning in two ways: policy advocacy and policy participation (Coleman, 1985). Policy advocacy is the attempt by the outside of sub-government interest groups to influence what should or should not be the subject matter of policy planning. Policy participation, on the other hand, is the active participation of interest groups in the formulation or implementation of policy (Coleman, 1985). To influence policy decision successfully, an interest group must maintain internal cohesion; possess or generate information about the policy process, public opinions and the policy field; and also mobilize political support (Coleman, 1985). Therefore, policy participants must collect and coordinate a complex variety of information and activity in order to take part in the sub-government policy-making process.

### 2.5.2 The Attentive Public

Public policy is not made and implemented by the public; instead government officials and political leaders determine public policies in the sub-government. However, the attentive public does play a pivotal role in influencing the nature and context of that policy, as they are the recipients of those policy decisions (Cole and Cole, 1983). Pross (1992: 121) found that the attentive public may include 'government agencies, private institutions, pressure groups, specific interest and individuals (including academics, consultants and journalists) who are affected by, or interested in, the policies of specific agencies and who follow and attempt to influence those policies, but do not participate in policy-making on a regular basis'.

Although the attentive public lacks the statutory power to be included in the sub-

Figure 2.5: The policy community model



Source: Pross (1992: 123)

government structure, but play an important role in the policy-making process. The primary function of the attentive public is to continually review, and inject differing views into policy-making. It provides the policy-makers with an element of diversity, draws attention to the inadequacies of proposed policies and often introduces new ideas based on its experience (Pross, 1992: 129). The public can contribute to policy-making by using communication methods such as consultation (the giving and receiving of advice) and participation through policy-related workshops and documents (Pross, 1992).

## 2.6 THE CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES: A POLICY INPUT MECHANISM

The citizen advisory committees are statutory parts of the policy community as outlined by Pross (1992), and their primary role is to advise concerned agencies; they acquire status depending upon the scope of their mandate in the consultation process. Consequently, there are many different types of advisory committees whose terms of reference vary widely, and whose mandate can range from partial to comprehensive (Filyk and Cote, 1992). In general, however, statutory advisory committees have access to all members of the policy community, including the project implementing agency, the executive, the sub-government and the wider public (Filyk and Cote, 1992). In a broader sense, there are three types of advisory committees depending upon their role in the participation process. These are *expert-level*, *policy-level*, and *site or task-specific advisory committees* (Long and Beierle, 1999). The expert committees are designed to provide outside technical advice on issues relevant to the function of agencies. Policy-level committees advise on the more value-laden, social dimensions of policy. In general, 'policy-level committees provide substantive input from the point of view of a variety of stakeholders, act as a sounding board for the acceptability of policies and provide some amount of democratic legitimacy to decisions' (Long and Beierle, 1999: 6-7). Regulatory negotiations and policy dialogues are designed to generate the substance of environmental decisions through consensus among various stakeholders (Long and Beierle, 1999).

While expert and policy-level advisory committees typically deal with national issues strategically, the task-specific advisory committees deal with a defined geographic area. Many agencies have moved toward more locally based advisory committees in recent years. Trends in environmental management, such as ecosystem management, community-based environmental protection, and integrated watershed management, as well as attention to environmental justice issues, have all necessitated the more active involvement of local communities and interests (Long and Beierle, 1999).

At the task-specific level, participants are likely to be 'closer to the people' than in policy-level committees (Long and Beierle, 1999). As committees become more issue-specific, boundaries between stakeholder jurisdictions are also likely to be more blurred. In some cases the leader of a community-based organization may also be a business or home-owner in the area; thus, the community leaders may expect a higher level of interest

in the outcomes of the decision. Long and Beierle (1999) note that at the site-or task-specific level, it may be easier to identify poorly funded or poorly organized advisory groups. However, community consultation through the task-specific approach demonstrates a more direct model of democracy (Long and Beierle, 1999). Policy-level committees represent a more traditional pluralist approach to decision-making.

PALM's main task-specific committees are LAPACs, established to provide communities with more input and access to the planning decisions. Other types of advisory committees in the ACT are presented in Table 2.4. LAPACs are chartered under the ACT's Territory Plan 1993 (see Chapter Four). PALM envisages LAPACs as 'bottom up' participatory efforts. The LAPACs are explicitly local and PALM specifies that most of the LAPAC members should be from the community groups, residents' associations and business people who have either businesses or business interests in those areas (PALM, 2000a). LAPACs are intended as a 'Community Planning Forum' for representatives of diverse community interests to present and discuss their needs and concerns related to ACT planning policy (PALM, 2000a).

## **2.7 THE URBAN PLANNING POLICY COMMUNITY**

The concept of 'policy community' has been developed to describe the environmental issues on which public policy decisions are made (Filyk and Cote, 1992; Dickinson 1999). The rise of environmentalism in the past thirty years has produced various advisory groups to counsel on environmental affairs (Long and Beierle, 1999); accordingly this 'policy community model' has been applied to evaluate municipal environmental advisory groups (Dickinson, 1999). The municipal advisory groups were mostly expert-level committees giving advice to the municipal government on environmental issues, but this model has not so far been applied in task-level planning advisory committees. In order to evaluate advisory committees in the public participation process and their roles in planning decisions, the policy community model discussed above must be adapted at the urban level of 'planning community'. Gleeson and Low (2000) saw the importance of a systematic and organized 'planning community' for 'better cities' programs, but they have not given any theoretical foundation for analysis in planning situations. Before a description of the way the policy community is defined in

Table 2.4: Planning advisory committees in ACT Government

Expert Advisory Committees	
Planning and Land Council	ACT government formed an expert advisory council for planning and land management purposes, effective from 1 July 2003; since then Council has met once on 31 July 2003. The council will provide ACT government and its planning agency PALM, now ACPLA, with expert advice on planning and development matters. It has no decision-making power, but works at a mostly strategic level for planning decisions.
Design Review Panel (DRP)	The role of the Design Review Panel is to provide advice on quality of design, in order to achieve High Quality Sustainable Design (HQSD), which maintains some design and planning guidelines. The panel consists of professional expertise from PALM and academic institutions.
Policy-Level Advisory Committees	
Planning and Development Forum (P & D Forum)	<p>An industry and community-based group, which takes a strategic overview and promotes input to the management of the ACT Government's planning and development policy agenda.</p> <p>The Forum advises the Minister for Planning and PALM on current planning policies and initiatives, the development of any new planning policies and initiatives, communication of those policies to Canberrans, and policy evaluation, including responses to community and industry consultation processes. The Forum is made up of 12 members, who represent industry groups, professional groups, conservation councils, national trusts, ACT councils of social services and community groups.</p>
Task-Level Advisory Committees	
Local Area Planning Advisory Committees (LAPACs)	LAPACs are committees of residents, business people and community groups who provide community advice to the Minister for Planning on planning and development matters. The main role of the LAPAC is to comment on the planning and design matters referred to committees that include publicly notifiable applications for commercial, retail, industrial, multi-unit development, preliminary environmental assessments (PEA) and other major development applications.

Source: Compiled from ACTPLA (2003d); DUS (2002); PALM (2001a, 2003b).

the planning decision-making process, a brief overview of the structures and process of planning agencies in the ACT is required. PALM is the official planning agency of the ACT Government, and can be compared with the traditional structure of city councils as part of local government. However, major urban affairs are administered by an umbrella organization the Department of Urban Services. The following section describes the structure of the ACT Government and provides information on planning components; the focus is on PALM, so no detail is provided about other levels of local government in Australia such as city councils and shire councils in various states and territories.

### 2.7.1 Planning and Land Management (PALM)

PALM officially describes its functions, responsibilities and the area of achievement in every annual report (DUS, 2002). It says PALM plans and facilitates high-quality sustainable development for the Australian Capital Territory, on behalf of ACT Government and community (PALM, 2001a, 2000b). PALM comprises various sections and branches, such as the Territory Planning, Development Management and Land Information and Building Services Branches (Figure 2.6). However, two branches, the Territory Planning Branch and the Development and Management Branch, are mostly responsible for carrying out planning activities and consultation programs across the ACT.

The Territory Planning Branch develops long-term strategic urban and rural planning on a metropolitan and regional level. It manages and reviews the Territory Plan; prepares master plans, development control plans and guidelines for development applications; monitors urban development trends; and evaluates environmental assessments on the impact of development proposals. The branch has responsibility for transport planning and develops sustainable development policies for the urban revitalization programs. It also investigates infrastructure requirements for the release of land, and prepares and manages capital works programs (DUS, 2002). The main responsibility of this branch is to examine continuing proposed variations to the Territory Plan: these proposals come to this branch after a rigorous consultation process with various planning stakeholders, and advisory committees. However, this branch has no direct link with the statutory and non-statutory consultation groups; consultations have been carried out by another branch, the Development and Management Branch.



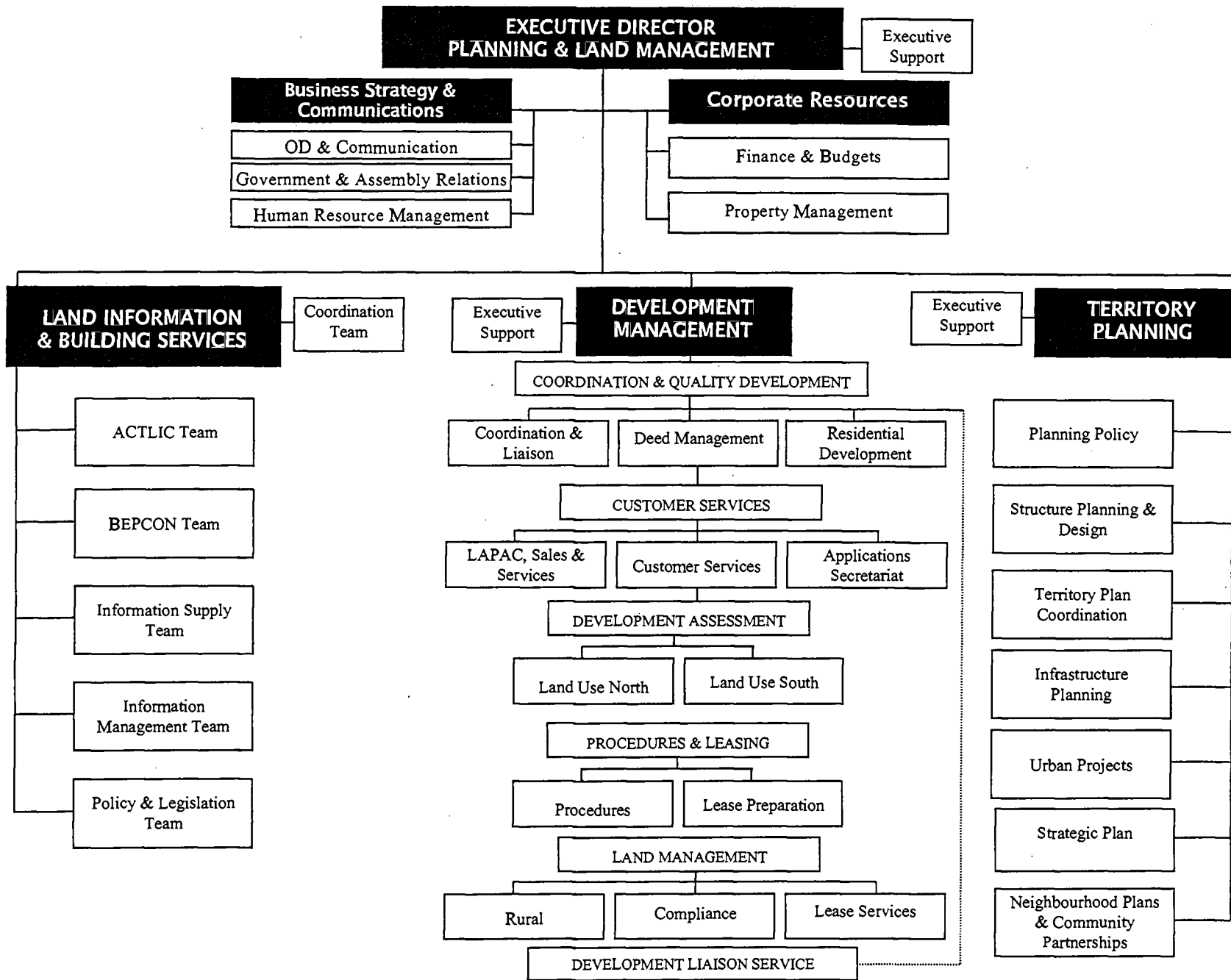


Figure 2.6: Organizational structure of Urban Services

Source: (PALM, 2001a)

The Development and Management Branch manages the lodgements, assessment and determination of development proposals; prepares new leases; and manages deeds of agreement. It administers the *Unit Titles Act 1970*; enforces lease provisions through compliance action; provides support for LAPACs and reviews and prepares legislation associated with its development management role (DUS, 2001). This branch normally conducts public consultations programs, with various statutory and non-statutory planning stakeholders.

### 2.7.2 The Role of PALM and Public Consultation

The main role of PALM is to administer the LAPAC meetings to register the community input in the planning process (PALM, 2000b). The specific roles of PALM are to:

- Take into account ‘community value statements’ properly prepared in consultation with local residents and other stakeholders, and submitted to the Minister for consideration, in the formulation of draft Territory Plan variations, Master Plans and planning guidelines, and in the consideration of the specific landuse and development proposals.
- Promote, within available resources, LAPACs to the wider community, as their voice in planning.
- Encourage applicants of the development applications (DA) to discuss their proposals with LAPACs and the affected members of the community, before lodging an application.
- Encourage proponents to provide DA with professional standards, ensuring High Quality Sustainable Design.
- Add information on LAPAC meeting times to relevant DA notification letters that are sent to adjacent lessees, and ensure that all references to DA contain both a street address and block section numbers.
- Encourage applicants to lodge potentially sensitive applications in time to allow the next scheduled meeting of the relevant LAPAC to consider it.
- Set the agenda with the conveners, detailing indicative items for each agenda item, and advising developers when their proposals are listed on the agenda; advise relevant members of late additions to the agenda that are pertinent to their area.

- Provide copies of DAs that are ‘Publicly Notified’ to the conveners and the suburb representative within two working days of the notice appearing in the local press.
- Arrange for presentations to LAPACs on relevant policy and neighbourhood planning proposals.
- Ensure that the LAPAC Coordinator or a substitute attends all regular meetings; whenever possible, have a member of PALM’s technical staff attend to provide planning/leasing advice (PALM staff are not required to stay at meetings that continue after 11pm).
- Provide a brief report on the outcomes of all DAs commented on.
- Have technical staff (planner) provide appropriate background advice on DAs to facilitate informed LAPAC discussion.
- Accept, in the majority of cases, comments from LAPACs on DAs up to two days after the regular meeting, even if the public notification period has closed.
- Consider feedback from LAPACs to relevant staff/agencies, and
- Provide draft minutes of meetings to the Conveners within five working days.

### 2.7.3 Role of Interest Groups

Apart from the planning stakeholders participating in the LAPAC process, the various interest groups on planning also attend the LAPAC meetings. The presence of interest groups at meetings is not regular: when they feel the planning proposals are important and will affect them, they attend the meetings in greater numbers. However, some are regular: these are non-professional interest groups concerned with environment, planning and development matters in their areas or elsewhere in Canberra, such as Planning ACT Together (PACTT), Save the Ridge, O’Connor Ridge Park Care, Friends of Black Mountain, Aranda Bush, Belconnen Community Council, Old Narrabundah Community Action Group, North Canberra Community Council and many other resident associations. These community-based groups can be characterized as *collective rights groups* (Beierle, 1998) since they are the bodies comprising various voluntary community action groups and resident associations. Considering the nature and activities of these groups, Lightbody (1995) has described them as noisy, negative and reactionary. Noisy because these community groups exploit the media to gain attention to counteract institutionalized power and resources; negative because they always pose negative attitudes towards any

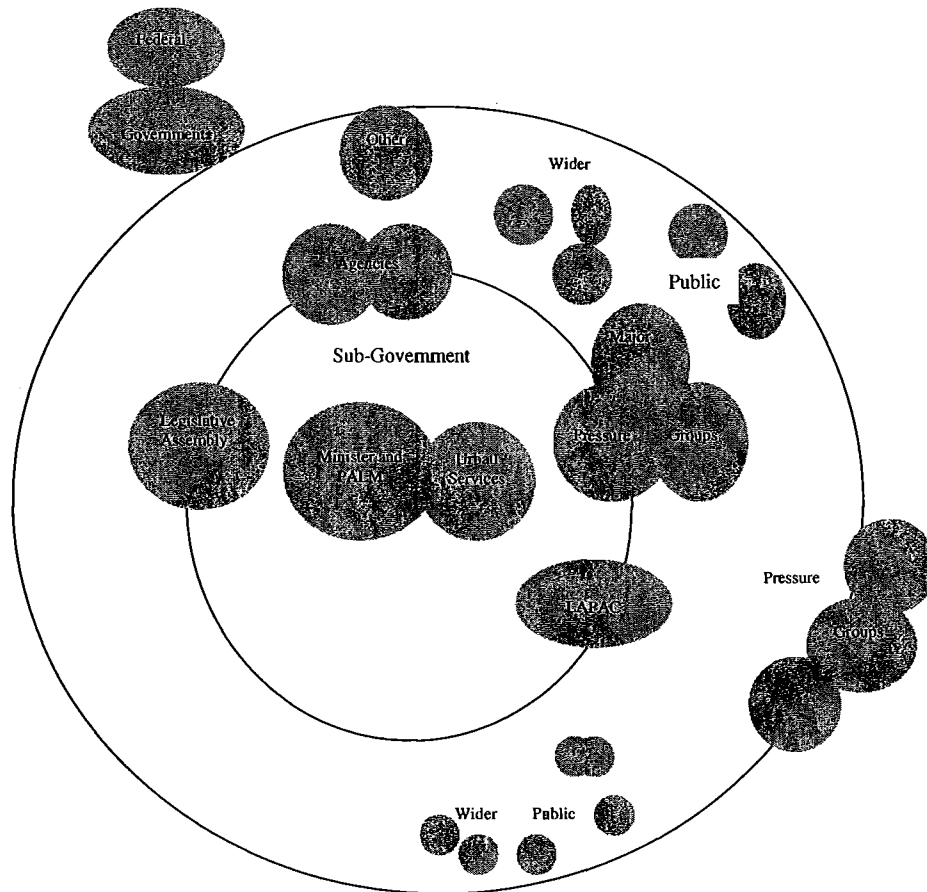
development proposal if they think the proposal is detrimental to a part of the city; and reactionary because they are not built into the policy process (Lightbody, 1995).

Some professional groups also participate in the LAPAC meetings to express their concerns on planning and development matters. These groups have no legal status to be consulted regularly, but PALM often consults them at formal meetings. Sometimes, the Minister for Planning also comes to talk with LAPAC members in the meetings. The professional groups are mostly architecture firms, developers' associations and real estate agents, and can be characterized as *institutionalized interest groups* on planning and urban revitalization programs (Lightbody, 1995). They have no voting power in final decision-making in the LAPAC, but they are given ample opportunity to participate in the discussion and submission of their concerns to planning authority. Lightbody (1995) notes that these interest groups use political resources such as social standing, professional knowledge and corporate wealth in a continuing policy-dialogue with city councils and senior planners. Pross (1992) observes that those institutionalized interest groups are located within the sub-government structure of an urban policy community.

The above sections provide an overview and description of the principal members of the 'urban policy community' in Canberra involved in planning and development matters. Although the structure of a policy community varies from city to city and from policy field to policy field, some generalizations can be made about the urban planning policy community and people influencing planning decisions. Figure 2.7 provides a visual representation of the conceptual urban planning policy community in Canberra. The boundaries between the sub-government and the wider public are not rigid; both groups may be occasionally involved depending upon the intensity of the planning and development matters. Pross (1992) describes the sub-government as policymaking body consists of government agencies, and the attentive public are those who draw attention to inadequacies in government policies. However, this study adapted the 'attentive public' into 'wider public' in the context of LAPAC consultation process where enthusiastic individuals come alone to comments on issue-specific planning initiatives only.

The sub-government is made up of PALM's standing committee on planning and environment, the Territory Planning Branch and the Development and Management

Figure 2.7: Urban planning policy community



Source: Adapted from Pross (1992)

Branch, with responsibility for developing Master Plans, section Master Plans, multi-unit development proposals, redevelopment of Group Centres, variations to the Territory Plan and carrying out consultation. The interest groups are development proponents, political parties, and community-based organizations interested in planning and development matters. The wider public includes individuals interested in planning matters. Overlapping the boundary between the wider public and the sub-government is the LAPAC, a means by which members of the public can seek to participate in and influence to planning decision-making. Figure 2.7 shows PALM’s executive, department of urban services, standing committee on planning and environment, the Territory Planning Branch and Development Management Branch, interest groups, and LAPAC itself. The discussion of LAPAC case studies in Chapters Five and Six, while not strictly limited to these key actors, does focus primarily on the roles on participants in the consultation

process and their perceived understanding of the fairness and effectiveness of public participation in planning decisions.

## **2.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter discussed existing planning theories in relation to public participation, and the models, approaches, and techniques of public participation in planning. It described the structure of policy community models including structure of sub-government, the wider public, collective interest groups, professional groups and advisory committees as policy input mechanisms for planning decisions. The concept of the policy community model and its adaptation to the urban planning policy community was also described. To illustrate the policy community model, this chapter analysed the structure of the ACT Government and its planning component PALM. The provision of the theoretical framework for the thesis leads to the development of an evaluative framework discussed in Chapter Three.

## **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Many planning agencies have experience in conducting public participation programs and many methods of participation have been suggested and implemented. However, important questions as to the most effective methods of public participation remain and there seems to be a general need for more systematic knowledge about ways to make public participation successful. Despite the widespread interest over the last thirty years, no consistent method has so far emerged for evaluating the factors of success and failure of participatory processes concerning planning and development issues (Davies, 1998). Searching the literature on public participation in planning showed that there was little comprehensive evaluation. Rosener (1981: 583) noted that the concept of public participation is complex and value-oriented, thus there are no agreed-upon evaluation methods and no widely held criteria for assessing the success or failure of a participation process. Despite these difficulties, there are published evaluation approaches available from various perspectives related to planning and environmental issues.

This chapter discusses the problems in public participation evaluation and the existing evaluating methods. Discussion of the existing models provides a basis to identify criteria that will be useful for evaluating public participation. Furthermore, evaluation of the existing approaches may provide an insight into specific criteria that may lead to developing an acceptable process for other approaches to evaluation of participation.

### **3.2 PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EVALUATION**

Davies (1998: 3) has identified two major problems in evaluating methods of public participation: the first is a lack of consensus on what public participation is supposed to accomplish and how to measure the results. Are participatory programs intended to empower disadvantaged groups, or to make it easier for government agencies to implement their programs? Is a program successful if it simply involves more of the public, or must it result in demonstrably better decisions? Rosener (1978a: 458) argued that decision-makers, members of the public and researchers assume more participation results in equal and better public policy, but there is no evidence to show that more participation is actually better.

A second, and perhaps more inflexible, problem to consistent evaluation arises from fundamental differences of opinion on the nature of democracy. Most people would not dispute that in a democracy, citizens have a right to participate in the decisions that affect them. However, there are many views on what form of participation should take. Should the public participate directly, through referenda, for example? Are surveys and focus groups sufficient to allow government managers to make decisions that are responsive to public opinion? Does the involvement of Citizen Advisory Groups in decision-making adequately reflect public concerns? Different perspectives on the nature of democracy and the purpose of participation have led to divergent methods for evaluating participatory programs. But early evaluation methods in the planning literature paid little attention to explicit criteria or to constructing evaluative frameworks. Later evaluation, in attempts to formalize an approach, emphasized the agency perspective, which required extensive data, and focused on the process of involvement in isolation (Smith, 1984).

Dickinson (1999) identified six problems in public participation evaluation:

1. The fact that there is no agreement on the meaning of effective public participation; it is very complex and value-laden, and therefore difficult to evaluate (O'Keefe 1999; Rosener 1978a, 1978b, 1981).
2. Measuring effectiveness can be difficult in a changing political and institutional climate (Syme and Sadler, 1994).
3. The absence of a control group is problematical since it is not possible to know whether no public involvement would have led to the same outcome (Syme and Sadler, 1994).
4. Evaluations have been quite rare and usually completed by the agency running the program, resulting in narrow objectives, biases, and selective measures of success (Sewell and Phillips, 1979).
5. Many evaluation models fail to assess the satisfactions derived by participants, and citizens are frequently not given the opportunity to evaluate participation programs (Sewell and Phillips, 1979).
6. There is no single, commonly accepted approach for evaluating public participation programs (Rosener, 1981).



To encourage further thinking about the evaluation of public participation approaches, Chess (2000: 771) discusses three general forms of evaluation and reasons for carrying them out. The forms are: summative, formative and impact evaluation.

*Summative evaluation* is the evaluation of a program after its completion to judge whether the public participation furthered progress towards planning outcomes, and satisfaction of the participants (Chess, 2000: 772).

*Formative evaluation* aims at improving programs in progress. To improve programs as they evolve, formative evaluation can provide feedback during program development and implementation. This kind of evaluation considers complex issues such as how well agencies are cooperating with the stakeholders, how well the agency is conducting public consultation, where resources are flowing and how implementation differs among sites. This kind of evaluation can also look at more obvious concerns, such as the relationships among stakeholders, perceptions of agency communication, and the effectiveness of meetings and information nights with the stakeholders (Chess, 2000: 772).

*Impact evaluation* is used for accountability, and focuses on the long-term results of programs; it has the potential to inform policy decisions and track social learning. Such an evaluation is more difficult to conduct because of cost, need for commitment over an extended time, and the problem of showing results from the public participation program under evaluation when there are many variables to consider (Chess, 2000: 773).

The three forms of evaluation described above can also serve other purposes, such as adding to knowledge about the effectiveness of different forms of participation under specific conditions, for instance public meetings in high-conflict situations. A systematic evaluation of public participation approaches may be able to define which criteria (such as context, forms of representation or agency action) are associated most closely with different outcomes, such as increasing participants' satisfaction with agency decisions (Chess, 2000: 774).

### **3.3 APPROACHES TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EVALUATION**

A number of authors have recognized the need for a systematic evaluation of participation programs (Homenuck, 1977; Rosener, 1978a, 1978b, 1981; Sewell and Phillips, 1979). Homenuck (1977) notes the importance of systematic evaluation, which

will provide a learning framework to improve the process and avoid past mistakes. However, a question remains unanswered: What should be evaluated? An evaluation can explore how participation activities take place (process evaluation) or it can assess the results of the public participation processes (outcome evaluation) (Tuler and Webler, 1995; Dickinson, 1999). Whether evaluating process or outcome, defining process or outcome goals is highly controversial (Tuler and Webler, 1995). Public participation goals are often difficult to define in clear, specific and measurable terms, and there is no general agreement about what goals to evaluate (Chess, 2000). So evaluators have tried a variety of approaches to deal with the difficulty of defining goals that include many evaluation methods (Rowe and Frewer, 2000). Some authors have made specific suggestions about the criteria that need to be satisfied for effective participation, or have discussed methods in terms of whether they incorporate some characteristics that are believed to be important (Crosby et al., 1986; Fiorino, 1990; Lynn and Busenberg, 1995; Shiffer, 1995; Webler et al., 1995; Beierle 1998, 1999; Oceau, 1999; Dickinson, 1999). Considering the barriers to public participation evaluation and the problems of identifying issues of evaluation, the existing literature describes three major approaches: user-based evaluations; theory based evaluations; and process-based evaluations (Palerm, 2000; Raimond, 2001).

The following section describes several evaluations of public participation methods. The analyses of eleven evaluations have been described: one user-based evaluation carried out by Rosener (1981), three examples of theory-based evaluation, (Webler, 1995; Beierle, 1998, 1999; Lauber and Knuth, 2000) and seven examples of process-based evaluation (Sewell and Phillips, 1979; Dickinson, 1999; Oceau, 1999).

### **3.3.1 User-based Evaluations**

The principle of *user-based evaluation* is that different participants will have different goals. Instead of trying to reconcile these goals, researchers have developed evaluations based on a questionnaire that includes the conflicting goals of citizens and agency staff (Chess, 2000: 774). Other researchers selected goals that reflect consensus or majority views. Rosener (1981: 584) developed a user-based evaluation to evaluate 'task-oriented workshops' used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) at two different sites. The task of the workshops was to determine whether or not the district engineer should issue a 'general permit' for development in a specific wetland area over which the Corps

had jurisdiction. The Corps felt that the workshop environment would allow the kind of interchange that could produce consensus among the affected parties, including residents, community groups, developers and other interested environmental groups. At least it would increase participants' understanding of the 'general permit' concept.

The evaluation was set up to find out if the workshops were an effective way to involve citizens in the Corps' regulatory decision-making process. A second purpose of the evaluation was to find out if this approach would generate comparable and generally applicable information about the effectiveness of public participation process (Rosener, 1981: 586).

The evaluation of the workshops was based on the notion that in order to generate reliable data, it is necessary to have clearly stated participation goals and objectives and a way to indicate a relationship between their achievement and the participation being assessed; however, the workshop participants would determine the goals and objectives of public participation. A sample of prospective participants was surveyed before the workshops to identify goals and objectives. Using the information gathered from initial interviews, a questionnaire was developed for workshop participants to identify their goals and objectives before the workshop; then at each workshop, participants filled out questionnaires providing data on whether they felt the goals and objectives were being achieved. Data were further gathered by observing workshops and analyzing the content of documents before, during and after workshops (Rosener, 1981: 587-588).

The evaluation showed that different groups had different goals and objectives. Use of the *user-oriented* method clearly identified the differences between the groups and data were generated to support the differences. There were two general kinds of goals: *process goals* and *outcome goals*; the Corps and public officials seemed to be concerned with process goals, while environmentalists and developers seemed concerned with outcome goals. In both cases, process goals were achieved; these goals were related to building confidence in the Corps and educating the public and Corps personnel about the use of the general permit. In one case all the outcome goals were met, in the other case few of them were met. The outcome goals that were not met were related to the Corps' expectation that sharing regulatory power would lead to support for the general permit. The main difference between the cases was that the successful case had involved stakeholders, including strong environmental interests, in the workshops.

The user-oriented evaluation provided information on whether the participation goals and objectives of all participants were achieved in the workshop process. The information was also used to develop an overall effectiveness measure for evaluating the workshop. This measure focused on goals that were shared between participating groups; if all the shared goals were met, the participation activity was evaluated as effective. According to Rosener (1978b: 585), the evaluation resulted in information that was comparable and that allowed for generalizations about the workshop process.

### 3.3.2 Theory-based Evaluations

Theory-based evaluations rely on criteria that are based on theories and models to evaluate public participation efforts (Raimond, 2001: 27). The first example of theory-based evaluation using a 'social goals' framework (Beierle, 1998) is selected because it is currently being applied to evaluate a large number of public participation methodologies in the United States (Raimond, 2001: 29). The second example of a theory-based evaluation, based on 'fairness and competence' (Webler, 1995) is presented here because it provides a good example of the work of researchers in the United States, Germany and Switzerland, and offers insight into the results of experiments with novel approaches to public participation (Raimond, 2001: 29). The third example described here is based on the 'Theory of Social Psychology of Procedural Fairness' (Lauber and Knuth, 1999), and describes the operational process of consultation in natural resource management, mostly in the form of Citizen Advisory Committees (Landre and Knuth, 1993b; Lauber and Knuth, 1998, 1999)

#### *The social goals framework*

Many theory-based evaluation studies have been conducted by the research organization Resources for the Future (Beierle, 1998, 1999; Davies, 1998, Long and Beierle, 1999). Beierle (1998) presents the framework for the organization's evaluation of public participation programs. The framework focuses on the evaluation of participation mechanisms intentionally instituted by government to involve lay people, or their representatives, in decision-making on environmental issues. The framework is designed with three objectives in mind: (i) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a number of different participatory methodologies; (ii) to be 'objective' in the sense of not taking the perspective of any one part to a decision; and (iii) to measure—to the extent feasible—tangible outcomes. Raimond (2001) notes that this evaluative framework is useful. It can

determine whether participatory programs are working or not, how they can be improved, which methodologies work best for particular needs and ultimately, whether participatory programs justify the commitment of public and private resources.

Social goals, according to Beierle (1999), are those goals, which can be applied to many participatory mechanisms. He identified six evaluation goals: educating and informing the public; incorporating public values into decision-making; improving the substantive quality of decisions; increasing trust in institutions; reducing conflict; and achieving cost-effectiveness.

The first goal, *educating and informing the public*, addresses the importance of environmental understanding by the participants. In a democracy, citizens have a right to be involved in the decisions which affect them (Davies, 1998); to be involved, they should know enough about the relevant issues to be able to formulate alternatives and discuss outcomes with government representatives and experts. At a minimum, the public should have enough information to make intelligent choices on the issues discussed in the consultation process (Beierle, 1998: 80). Therefore, government should provide participants with adequate information and should ensure that technical rigor will not hamper the participants' ability to participate in the decision-making process.

To evaluate the achievement of this goal, Beierle (1999) proposes some criteria and question sets. How many members are actively involved in participatory forums or take advantage of the information and access provided to them? What percentage of the wider public is reached through education campaigns, media relations, or interaction with more active participants? Does the public feel that they have sufficient knowledge to contribute to decision-making? Do the participants in the process understand their role clearly and succinctly? Are sufficient time and money available to obtain credible, relevant and, if necessary, independent information?

The second goal of *incorporating public values into decision-making* discusses the differences in the perceptions by the lay and expert people in the decision making process. Beierle (1999) notes that differences over values, assumptions and preferences need to be discussed in a process that promotes mutual education and thus incorporated in the decision-making process. To give the widest range for discussion about values, assumptions and preferences, all the affected parties should be included, and adequate

consideration given to their preferences. Relevant questions for evaluating this goal include the effect of public contributions and the scope of the public represented (Beierle, 1999): Is the information from the public participation used to review analyses for the decision-making process? Does the public feel that they have an impact on decisions? Where public input is not incorporated into analyses or decisions, does the relevant agency provide justification, which is acceptable to the public? Are all affected parties included or represented, particularly those with no formal organization? Do participants reflect the larger 'public' they expect to represent, for example, socioeconomic criteria? Are there mechanisms to hold participants accountable to the community, which they represent?

The goal of *improving the substantive quality of decisions* recognizes the public as a legitimate source of knowledge and ideas for making decisions (Fiorino, 1990). The public may improve the substantive quality of decisions by improving technical quality—by identifying relevant factual information or discovering mistakes—or by generating alternative solutions that satisfy a wide range of interests (Beierle, 1999). Beierle also notes that the public is the source not only of values, assumptions, and preferences, but also of facts and innovative alternatives.

Relevant questions can elicit evidence that decisions are 'better' in terms of participants' satisfaction and in terms of generating new information (Beierle, 1999): Does the involvement process clearly increase all parties' satisfaction with the outcome relative to the likely non-participatory outcome? Does the process generate new alternatives? Does the process have provision for trade-offs or compensation for the parties identified? Do the relevant new facts clearly improve the technical analysis? Are the decisions technically, financially, or otherwise achievable?

The fourth goal, *increase trust in institutions*, is based on the dramatic decline in public trust in government and other major institutions. It recognizes that such loss of trust is a legitimate reaction to scandals and mismanagement, but that its restoration is crucial to cooperation between the government and the public in managing the environment. To evaluate this goal the following questions have been proposed: Does the public have confidence in the agency's technical abilities? Does the public feel that its interests are the same as the agency's interests, or at least valued by the agency? Is the agency willing

to turn over decision-making authority? Does the public let the agency undertake a similar decision-making process with less public oversight?

The fifth goal, *reducing conflict*, is based on the argument that collaborative decision-making is more likely to result in lasting decisions, which increase the aggregate benefits for the parties involved. Even if the parties cannot resolve a particular issue, the process ought to help participants understand the goals and perspectives of others by fostering communication and building relationships. Ideally, relationships (and decisions, if made) would remain stable over time, reflecting a continuing absence of conflict, or agreed-upon mechanisms for resolving emergent differences (Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987). The questions to evaluate this goal are: Does the involvement process reduce political or public opposition to the decision as reflected in testimony at public hearings, letters in relevant news sources, the level of activism, or political debate? Does the process lead to less litigation than a reasonable norm or baseline? If an agreement is reached, is it stable over a reasonable period of time? Are there mechanisms for re-negotiation and discussion as information and situations change? Does the involvement process improve the image of the agency in such a way that future issues may be easier to deal with? Does the involvement improve or worsen communication and cooperation among the interested parties during and after the process?

The final goal, *cost-effectiveness*, addresses the appropriate use and scope of public participation mechanisms. Cost-effectiveness can be considered the goal which constrains the achievement of the first five goals: was the public participation mechanism the most cost-effective way (money, time, risk, and opportunity cost) of achieving the benefits relative to other mechanisms which reasonably could have been expected to achieve the same result? The most important step in determining cost-effectiveness is the evaluation of the first five goals, as these define an important criterion of 'effectiveness' in public participation. The evaluation is then supported by questions of valuation: How much does the involvement process cost all participants in time and money? What are the opportunity costs for all participants of shifted resources and delayed action? What costs does the process help to avoid?

Beierle's article reviews a number of public participation methods and describes which goals each method could achieve. Matching methods to goals is useful for government

agencies, because it assists in selecting the type of method is most likely to achieve the goals of interest. In order to match methods to goals, Beierle breaks down the various methods into four component characteristics: information flows; the degree of interaction among potentially opposing interests; the type of representation; and the decision-making role of the public. Each characteristic is linked to the six social goals by way of hypothesized relationships. The 'social goals' framework is useful, as it identifies the strengths and weaknesses of public participation methods. In turn, this information is helpful in selecting methods that suit the needs of government agencies and the public.

### *Social psychological theories of procedural fairness*

Another theory-based evaluation of public participation is based on social psychological theories (Laird, 1993; Thibaut and Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1989; Tyler and Griffin, 1991). These theories are also called 'Theories of Justice' which 'provide a clear set of principles for researchers to use when judging fairness of a process and outcome of the decisions' (Smith and McDonuch, 2001: 240). Social psychologists have made major contributions to our understanding of how participants judge the fairness of the consultation process; some of them have offered definitions of fairness and criteria to evaluate existing participation processes (Lauber and Knuth, 1999).

Lind and Tyler (1988) have characterized the criteria of fairness into two sections, distributive and procedural fairness. 'Distributive fairness refers to the fairness of decisions, and procedural fairness refers to the fairness of the processes used to produce these decisions' (Lauber and Knuth, 1999: 20). However, the criteria used for evaluating procedural fairness have received considerable attention due to their relation with participants' satisfaction with the existing consultation procedures. Although the concept of procedural fairness has received widespread attention, there are disagreements about what criteria should be used in determining that a process is fair or unfair. Thibaut and Walker (1975) emphasized direct participation in the decision and the opportunity to voice one's opinion as essential principles by which people judge the fairness of process. They also noted that perceptions of fairness are related to decision control, or the amount of influence participants have over the outcome of a procedure. To evaluate the fairness of the participation process, Leventhal et al., (1980: 172) have proposed six principles of procedural fairness: the consistency with which a procedure is applied over persons and across time; suppression of personal self-interest; the accuracy of the information used in



the process; the existence of opportunities to correct or modify a decision after it is made; representativeness of the concerns of all decision recipients; and the maintenance of ethical standard during the course of decision-making.

Later, Lind and Tyler (1988) added two more principles, *neutrality*, and *trust* for evaluating procedural fairness. Lauber and Knuth (1999: 21) have also identified nine criteria to judge a public participation process. The criteria were developed to measure the fairness of citizen participation in moose management decision-making. The criteria were: the adequacy of opportunities for citizens to participate; the agency's receptivity to citizen input; citizens' influence over the final decision; the quality of knowledge of reasoning of agency staff; the quality of knowledge and citizens who participated in the process; whether the process was completed in a reasonable time; whether the process was completed for a reasonable cost; whether the process led to a stable decision; and whether the process led to improved relationships between stakeholders.

Lauber and Knuth (1999) note that it is important to understand the criteria people use to judge the quality of citizen participation, because this can help to design processes that people will accept. As mentioned, these criteria were developed for evaluating citizen participation in natural resource management, particularly the re-introduction of moose in New York State. Lauber and Knuth (1999) are skeptical about the application of the criteria in other contexts, but hope that they may serve as a useful framework for evaluating past findings on people's perception of the citizen participation process (Lauber and Knuth, 1999). They have grouped the nine criteria into four categories: fairness, wisdom, efficiency and stability, which have been adopted from Susskind and Cruikshank's (1987) components of a good decision-making process. Later, Lauber and Knuth (1999: 24) assigned six criteria to the *fairness* categories in order to measure participant's perceptions of procedural fairness. These criteria are *impartiality* (whether the agency is impartial during the consultation process); *honesty* (whether the agency is honest during the consultation process); *equal opportunity* (whether all participants have an equal opportunity to participate in the process); *representation* (whether all viewpoints from the affected parties are adequately represented); *voice*: (whether all participants have the opportunity to voice their opinions during the consultation process); and *influence* (whether all participants have equal influence on the final decision).

Two criteria have been assigned to the *wisdom* category: *knowledge/reasoning* (whether the agencies demonstrate sufficient knowledge and sound reasoning) and *citizens' knowledge* (whether the citizens who participated in the process are well informed). The *efficiency* category also comprises two criteria: *cost* (whether the process is completed for a reasonable cost) and *time* (whether the process is completed in a reasonable amount of time). The *stability* category comprises two criteria: *stable decision* (whether the decision is long-lasting) and *relationship* (whether relationships improve during the process).

#### *Using meta-criteria: fairness and competence*

Another theory-based approach to evaluation was proposed by Webler (1995). Using the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas's (1984) concepts of *ideal speech situation* and *communicative competence* (Habermas, 1987), Webler developed a theory of public participation (Webler, 1992, 1995). His theory focuses on the micro-level of communication among participants in the consultation process, as opposed to Beierle's theory that focuses more on the macro-levels of the function of public participation in maintaining social and political order (Guglielmo 1998; Raimond, 2001). Webler (1995) attempts to adapt the ideal speech situation to evaluate criteria of environmental decision-making, based on two meta-criteria: *fairness*, and *competence*. He notes that it is important to understand how public involvement relates to individuals at both personal and social levels. Because participation is a highly specialized form of interaction between individuals, discussing issues that require verbal communication. Since interaction among participants is primarily based on language, he focuses on how language is used in the discussion process. In doing so, Webler (1995) adapts Habermas's (1987) concepts of ideal speech situation and communicative competence for analysing a participation process that is believed to be fair and competent. He argues that Habermas's ideal speech situation does not adequately capture the meta-criteria of fairness and competence, and proposes participation rules for achieving a competent ideal speech situation based on rules for communicative competence (Webler, 1995). The three main components of Webler's model are communicative competence; ideal speech situation; and meta-criteria.

Habermas (1979) defined *communicative competence* as the ability to use language to create understanding and agreement, that is, to communicate rationally. When

communicative actions occur between two or more parties, and produce a consensus understanding, they are evaluated as communicatively competent. This process can occur when participants enter a discussion with the objective of reaching consensus understanding. The participants in discussion process must be determined to reflect on their own beliefs, values, preferences, and common interests. They should also be flexible enough to accept alternative definitions of existing reality, and must listen to other participants' assertions with an open mind, which can accept other facts and realities (Webler, 1995).

There are many opinions on the conditions of the *ideal speech situation* (White, 1988). Habermas (1984) imagined an ideal speech situation which could occur with free and uncoerced discussions among all affected stakeholders in a participation process. The theory of communicative competence is the precondition for the ideal speech situation. If the participants follow the elements of communicative competence, a rationally motivated understanding and a consensus agreement can emerge as opposed to one created through manipulation and coercion. Webler (1995) revised Habermas's model to capture both fairness and competent meta-criteria and proposed two sets of rules, one for a fair and another for a competent ideal speech situation.

Webler's (1995: 51) conditions for an ideal speech situation that ensures *fairness* are:

1. Anyone who considers himself to be potentially affected by the results of the planning process must have an equal opportunity to attend and discuss in the participation process.
2. Every participant must have an equal opportunity to clarify each other's terms and definitions, and should have ample opportunity to propose alternative views of any planning process; all should have the opportunity to challenge one another's proposals or various alternatives to a proposal.
3. Every participant must have an equal opportunity to challenge others' assertions, and to challenge the sincerity and authenticity of the assertions.

4. Every participant must have an equal opportunity to influence the choice of how the final determination of validity will be made and to determine the discussion closure: that is, how to decide when there is no consensus.

Webler's (1995: 59) rules for an ideal speech situation that ensures *competence* are:

1. Every participant must meet a minimal societal standard for cognitive and lingual competence.
2. Every participant must have access to the knowledge needed to make assertions and criticize those of others.
3. Speakers must verify the result of any attempt to translate expressive claims.
4. Judgments about conflicting assertions must be made using the most reliable methodological techniques available.

Webler (1995) formulated his model of public participation by deriving two meta-criteria, *fairness* and *competence*. In developing his model for evaluating the public participation process, he was overwhelmingly influenced by the theory of Ideal Speech Situation and Communicative Competence. Fairness is essential for producing a forum where equality and popular sovereignty can emerge and personal competence can develop. When participation is fair, everyone takes part on an equal footing. Competence refers to the ability of the decision-making process to provide participants with procedural tools and knowledge of relevant aspects in making the best possible decision (Webler, 1995).

Webler (1995: 79) defines *fairness* as distribution of sufficient opportunities for the participants to act meaningfully in the participation process. When people come together with the intention of reaching, understanding and making public decisions in a fair process, four fundamental actions for the participant must be available. These are to *attend* (be a participant in consultation meeting); *initiate* discussion (make statements on issues); *debate* in discussion (ask for clarification, challenge, answer, and argue); and *decide* in the decision-making (resolve disagreements). These are the four *needs* of a fair process and are relevant to each of the three *activities* that constitute a public participation process: agenda and rule making, moderation and rule enforcement, and discussion.

Webler (1995) has discussed the above criteria for evaluating the fairness of public participation process. Fair participation in agenda-setting and rule-making means that all participants in the consultation process should have the same opportunity to take part in activities that determine the agenda and rules for discussion. Fairness in the moderator and rule enforcement means that everyone in the process should have an equal chance to suggest moderators and a method of facilitation. Fairness in discussion and debate is making sure that everyone has an equal chance to discuss an agenda and to influence the final decisions (Webler and Tuler, 2000).

Webler (1995: 81) defined *competence* as the performance of individuals in the consultation process, compared to what can be reasonably expected of them, given the current information and knowledge available. Competence refers to the individual's ability to provide participants with access to knowledge, explanations of terms and access to interpretations of understanding; and the best procedures for resolving disputes about knowledge and interpretations and for checking the authenticity and sincerity of any assertions. Webler (1995) speaks of competence as being capable of contributing to the definition of the collective will through participation. Therefore, participants are not only competent in understanding terms, concepts and definitions but also able to share the social construction of reality. Competence thus relates to 'psychological heuristics, listening and communication skills, self reflection and consensus building necessary for understanding and agreement to emerge from the participation process' (Webler, 1995: 58).

On the basis of Webler's theory, a number of researchers evaluated eight public participation methods: citizen advisory committees, citizen initiatives, citizens' juries, compensation, the Dutch study groups, mediation, negotiated rule-making and planning cells. These methods for public participation were discussed in Chapter Two (Table 2.1).

### **3.3.3 Process-based Evaluations**

A *process-based evaluation* depends on perspectives and criteria set aside by the researcher, which are believed to be pertinent for specific conditions of issues that are being evaluated (Beierle, 1999). Though process-based evaluation has recently received considerable attention, as long ago as the late 1970s and early 1980s there was some evidence of it (Sewell and Phillips, 1979). The most common criteria evaluated in the

process-based approach were the perceptions and attitudes of participants toward the existing context and process of public participation (Dickinson, 1999). This approach broadly identifies criteria that include the participant's perception of the decision-making process; the agency's perception of the consultation process; assessing whether participation resulted in a change in policy; comparing the objectives of the participation process with the outcome; process analysis to ascertain how participation was implemented and functioned; perceptions of the general public; comparing overall agency goals and objectives with outcomes of the participation process; cost efficiency; relationships among stakeholders and feedback analysis (Cole, 1974; Pierce and Doerkson 1976; Homenuck, 1977; Ertel, 1979a, 1979b; Cole and Caputo, 1984; Hutcheson, 1984; Hutcheson and Prather, 1988).

Although process-based evaluation began in the early 1970s most of the evaluation literature was not comparable, as the majority of the research consisted of case studies (Cole, 1974; Sewell and Phillips, 1979; Dickinson, 1999). Several frameworks were proposed during the 1970s for evaluation of participation programs; of these, four models, Vindasius (1965), Farrell et al., (1976), Hampton (1977) and Homenuck (1977) have been selected for a brief discussion in this section. Some of those models were designed to evaluate experience in urban planning and others were created to appraise experiences in natural resource management and environmental decision-making.

### ***Environmental decision-making and planning***

One of the earliest formal case study evaluations was undertaken by Vindasius (1965) to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the participation process in environmental decision-making. She evaluated a case study through some criteria based on 'influence of the process' on the outcome of decisions. The 'process' of participation was defined as the impact of the clear role of the participants, adequate budget and staff for the consultation process, communication and accountability, relationship, and compatibility between the planning process and the public participation program. Her framework relies on the perceptions of the involvement in the consultation process of stakeholders, that is, agency staff, program personnel, and community leaders, to evaluate what objectives of the participation process have been achieved.

The second case study was based on Hampton's (1977) assessing of public participation in the formulation of structure plans in the United Kingdom (Hampton, 1977). It was designed to be applicable to participation programs in general, rather than to evaluate a specific case study. For Hampton, the purpose of evaluation was not only to improve existing processes of participation but also to increase the citizens' empowerment in the decision-making process. He observed that the satisfaction of citizens on every process criterion should be at least as important as that of the agency or the planner in evaluating the success of a participation program (Hampton, 1977). Hampton proposed three main criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of participation in terms of structuring relevant information and its dissemination among concerned stakeholders: information dispersal (what information is giving to planning stakeholders, and who is informed); information gathering (what information is being gathered, who is listened to); and interaction between planning authority and public (what kind of interaction, who the public is).

Sewell and Phillips (1979) note that Hampton's framework has many features on challenging information to the planning stakeholders which could be adapted into another participation process. It takes specific account of the possibility that different segments of the people have different goals and expectations from the process. The satisfaction of participants is also different, due to the involvement of people with diverse backgrounds. Hampton gave importance to capturing the conflicting views and values of their expected outcomes and comparing them with the perceived satisfactions of the existing process, and thus saw the degree of participation not, as Arnstein (1969) had suggested, as a ladder, but rather as a series of interlocking steps. Hampton also considered amicable interaction between the planning agency and the public to be necessary for an effective participation program.

Farrell, et al., (1976) proposed a comprehensive model for the evaluation of public participation in planning. They defined the purposes of participation from the planning agency's viewpoint: to enhance public acceptance of planning decisions; to provide a source of data for planning activities; and to educate the public so that they will acquire necessary skills that can be used to deal with planning problems in their own communities.

The Farrell et al., (1976) model identified seven different types of involvement needed to achieve those purposes of participation: persuasion, education, information-feedback, consultation, joint planning, delegated authority, and self-determination. The success of a program is evaluated in relation to the type of involvement employed. They proposed three evaluation criteria: *outcomes* (the extent to which objectives were achieved); *process* (the degree to which objectives were successfully implemented); and *attitude* (the degree to which the attitudes of those involved were positively or negatively affected).

Sewell and Phillips (1979) noted that Farrell and his associates proposed a viable approach for evaluating participation in planning. They emphasized that when possible, the actual evaluation should be undertaken by independent evaluators or observers. It should also be ensured that the evaluators were not involved with the planning agency and its planning process or program implementation. This was intended not only to foster objectivity but also to enable comparability in the evaluation of public participation programs.

In 1970s, a comprehensive framework was proposed by Homenuck (1977) at the Canadian Conference on Public Participation (Sewell and Phillips, 1979). His framework focuses on a general approach to evaluation of participation programs, rather than to assessing a specific case (Sewell and Phillips, 1979). Homenuck (1977) noted that participation programs contribute partly to the solution of a given problem and partly to the overall goals of the planning agency programs. However, Sewell and Phillips (1979) suggested that they must be evaluated separately. Homenuck (1977) noted that public participation is a planning effort and participants are performing *functions* on the one hand and contributing to the *process* of involvement on the other hand. He identified five *functions* and five dimensions of *process* subsumed by a participation program. The five kinds of *function* are dissemination of information to the planning stakeholders; collection of information; response and feedback evaluation; creation/initiation; and mutual education. The five dimensions of *process* are recruiting of participants; making decisions; interaction; reduction of data; and establishment of boundaries.

Homenuck (1977) suggested that in evaluating these *functions* and *process* criteria, an evaluator must be careful in choosing methods, as some criteria may be suitable for



measuring through either quantitative or qualitative methods. This evaluative framework is certainly a comprehensive approach for evaluating public participation in planning; it is concerned not only with the *outcomes* of the consultation process but also with the *process* itself.

### ***Water resource planning***

Cole (1974) noted that the public participation evaluation literature was not comparable, the majority being in the nature case studies. Twenty years later, Syme and Sadler (1994) concluded that there have been no comprehensive approaches to evaluate participation programs. They have developed six criteria for evaluating participation process in water resource planning, based on a case study in Western Australia. The case study identified important 'players' in the participation process in the interests of evaluating existing processes: the politicians, planners, sponsors, consultants, researchers and public who have direct or indirect involvement with the process and may pose different opinions on the existing consultation process, so that most of the evaluations by them are subjective rather than objective. The values of evaluators are always added in the discussion of evaluating an existing practice. Thus, a structural form of evaluation would make it easier to give an evaluation process acceptable to others, and hence improve the evaluation process in which the researcher is involved. The six criteria developed by Syme and Sadler (1994: 532-534) are that the objectives of the public involvement program must be agreed on between the affected public and the planners; the criteria for showing that objectives have been met need to be agreed on between the public and planners; the evaluation should have continuing influence; those responsible for carrying out the evaluation need to be identified when objectives are set; resources for evaluation should be allocated at the beginning of the public involvement program; and the method should be jointly chosen.

The above criteria were applied to water resource planning in Perth in Western Australia. Syme and Sadler (1994: 539) note that 'evaluation needs to be incorporated in the process as something that can provide timely direction to the overall public involvement program. It can also provide these directions if there is a partnership between the researcher and the practitioner, which also includes the public and stakeholders. Evaluation is not a hands-off data-gathering procedure, but an interactive one, which influences the outcome of public involvement'.

### *Environmental Advisory Groups*

A process-based study was recently carried out by Dickinson (1999), adapting Smith's *context-process-outcome* evaluative approach (Smith, 1984, 1987, 1993). Dickinson analysed the form, functions and effectiveness of Citizen Advisory Committees on the environment. Using the context-process-outcome evaluative approach, she concluded that evaluation of consultation process should address the *context* and how the context refers to the *process*, by which the *outcomes* of consultation can be judged. Dickinson (1999) identified some criteria to address the context of the expert-based advisory committee for evaluating its overall effectiveness. These criteria include the historical background of the committee, government structures linked to the committee, the features of the advisory group and the role of the attentive public in the participation process. She assumed that these factors would serve as the basis for understanding the larger context in which public participation occurs, and would provide a broader view of the policy community and a deeper understanding of the range of people and interests involved. On the other hand, *process* evaluation considers the goals and objectives of the advisory committee, the nature of the public represented, operational issues of conducting meetings, and views of stakeholders on the environment. The outcomes analysis assesses the overall nature of the advisory committee. It also discusses the perceived understanding of participants about the effectiveness of all stakeholders in the decision-making process, the structure and functions of the advisory committee, membership, recruitment and representation, operational process of meetings, and the participants' level of satisfaction with participation process (Dickinson, 1999).

Crosby et al., (1986) used a similar approach to evaluate a citizens' panel on agriculture and water quality management in Minnesota. Tuler and Webler (1999) studied a citizens' advisory committee in forest policy-making to identify the principles of what constitutes a 'good' process. They used an approach based on the qualitative method of grounded theory, a theory that advocates participants identifying the issues for the evaluation. Seven criteria emerged from their analysis: access to the process; power to influence process and outcomes; access to information; structural characteristics to promote constructive interaction; facilitation of constructing personal behaviour; adequate analysis; and enabling of future processes (Tuler and Webler, 1999: 437).

### *Park Management*

Another notable study was carried out by Ochteau (1999), who evaluated Parks Canada's approach using nine criteria. In her evaluative approach, effective public participation is defined as enabling the development of cooperative relationships between governments and local communities (Ochteau, 1999). The evaluation was carried out in two steps: the first consisted of a detailed evaluation of the public participation approach used in the marine park establishment process; the second step was analysis of the general approach to participation and the identification of the main constraints to effective public participation within Parks Canada. Ochteau (1999) held a series of interviews with Parks Canada personnel and others involved in the establishment of national parks. Reviewing many reports on Park Canada's management strategy and the role of local communities, she proposed nine criteria to evaluate effective public participation as follows.

1. *Defined roles.* A clear definition of roles for each representative is necessary to provide clarity to the process and thus avoid distrust between parties.
2. *Self-design.* The parties are involved in the design of the participation process.
3. *Objective—driven.* One or more objectives have been identified and these motivate the development of the participation approach. The participants are informed about and understand the objectives of the public participation.
4. *Inclusive.* All parties with significant interests in the project are involved in the public participation process.
5. *Equal opportunity.* All parties have equal access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the process.
6. *Flexibility-iterativeness.* Because of uncertainty about 'facts', the absence of information, external events etc., the process of looking at alternatives, and at the potential for implementation is an iterative one: the participation process is flexible and allows the parties to be involved in this iterative process.
7. *Promote learning.* Participation processes are learning opportunities for all participants. Training in communication, organization, and negotiation skills is a necessary component of public participation.
8. *Building trust.* The parties must acquire trust in the process and in the other parties' commitment to a fair process.

9. *Neutral third party.* The active involvement of the parties in the participation process is a difficult task and can lead to numerous stalemates. The presence of a mediator for training, planning the process, keeping the momentum and dealing with conflicts is significant for the success of the process.

The above approach has many advantages for evaluating public participation in local communities. It analyses the process of involvement of local planning stakeholders and their roles in park management. The evaluation process is mainly based on the perceptions of planners and their consideration of effective criteria for the participation process. Without knowing much about the local communities and their perception of existing processes, it would be naïve to comment on a process as fair and effective. This type of evaluation is one-sided and has rarely given attention to local communities; as a result, it was concluded that proposing criteria for effective public participation in order to assist planners in the development of a public participation strategy would not alone suffice to ensure more effective public participation (Ochteau, 1999). Ochteau proposed three areas of intervention: the need for development of the planners' skills; the development of an integrated planning approach, which includes participation; and the disparity between the policies and the actual practices of public participation at Parks Canada.

In conclusion, it can be said that most process-based evaluative approaches to public participation are likely to depend on the specifics of any particular situation (Crosby, 1991; Fiorino 1990; Lynn and Kartez, 1995; Webler, 1995, 1999). Most of them are place and issue-specific and also based on case studies in nature; thus, the evaluators had to propose their own criteria for evaluating existing processes (Rowe and Frewer, 2000). Most of the criteria discussed in the literature of process-based evaluation are procedural rather than substantive (Middendorf and Busch, 1997), in that they relate more to what makes for an effective process, rather than how to measure effective outcomes that is, the quality of final decisions (Rowe and Frewer, 2000: 10).

Theory-based evaluation focuses on normative criteria, applied universally to any public participation effort, instead of basing evaluations on participants' satisfaction or other criteria specific to a particular public participation effort (Chess, 2000: 775). However,

the current literature indicates that theory-based evaluations are mostly based on evaluating various issues of environmental decision-making such as waste management, water quality management and nuclear clean-up programs (Raimond, 2001). Webler's (1995) theory of meta-criteria has been applied and evaluated in many environmental issues (Guglielmo, 1998; Palerm, 2000), but never evaluated to issues other than environment, with an exception of evaluating the issues of natural resource management (Tuler and Webler, 1999; Webler and Tuler, 2000). Webler's meta-criteria have two major drawbacks, which make it inadequate for the assessment of public participation programs in planning. 'First, it reflects relevant shortcomings inherent in the theory of communicative competence that have been pointed out by Habermas's critics and, second, it focuses solely on assessing opportunities for participation, neglecting the role of the country-specific context in determining the effectiveness of such provisions' (Palerm, 2000: 582). Later, Webler et al., (1995) added one more criterion 'social learning', in evaluating public participation programs in environmental decision-making, but specific rules for it have not been defined. The main elements which promote social learning, as proposed by Webler et al., (1995) are site visits, small-group work, an egalitarian atmosphere, repeated meetings, unrestricted opportunities to influence the process, political support for the process, direct links to formal decision-makers, expert support to the participants during the consultation meetings and responsibility to design and implement the impact assessment method.

However, Webler and Tuler (2000: 576) re-organized the theoretical criteria 'to bring depth and insights to the theoretical criteria', so as to adequately capture the issue-specific context and existing practices for evaluation. The evaluation of environmental issues has also been found in the theory of social goals. Beierle's (1999) six criteria of social goals have been used for evaluating issues related to the environment, waste management and nuclear clean-up programs. Day (1997) notes that after the 1980s most evaluating approaches were based on environmental decision-making and rarely have any studies so far related to public participation in planning. Therefore, this study has evaluated existing models of public participation and their evaluative criteria, which can be a base line for developing criteria to evaluate public participation in planning. Examining of the literature on planning makes it clear that neither process-based evaluation nor theory-based evaluation alone can be recommended as ideal guidelines for the evaluation of public participation in planning. With restriction to a specific approach,

there is a chance of losing important criteria that are pertinent to other systems of participation in planning. Considering the current limitations, this study proposes to integrate process and theory-based criteria for evaluating public participation in planning. The integration will allow this research to adapt the country and issue specific criteria for evaluating the existing practices. The nature of the evaluation is summative not formative, because formative evaluations will lead to immediate program changes for a specific project, while summative evaluations involve systematic and cross-sectional analysis for providing greater understanding of public participation (Chess, 2000: 779-780). The following section is a theoretical framework developed for evaluating public participation in planning. Most evaluation methods followed a method of public participation process, thus this study used planning advisory committees for the evaluation.

### **3.4 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING**

This study has developed a theoretical framework for evaluating public participation in planning integrating process and theory-based evaluation. Combining the principles of social goals (Beierle, 1998) and issues of the context-process-outcome approach (Dickinson, 1999; Smith, 1993) with those of fairness and competence (Webler, 1995; Lauber and Knuth, 1999) produces ten evaluative criteria, twenty-six sub-criteria and sixty-six questions on whether the process is fair and effective. Figure 3.1 shows the essential criteria for evaluating the fairness and effectiveness of public participation in planning (detailed questions for all criteria are given in Table 8.1 and Table 8.2 in Chapter Eight). The framework integrates the available theory and discusses pre-determined criteria (criteria that determined previously) and existing processes (criteria that currently exist) in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of public participation.

The aim of the framework is to recommend evaluative criteria, which are likely to work better. The proposed criteria can be applied to many public participation mechanisms in general and citizen advisory committees in particular. However, issues and places may vary in context and therefore need consideration for amalgamation with existing criteria. Evaluation criteria should be framed in a way that enables evaluators to consider local

issues and to fit them in the evaluation process. Figure 3.1 illustrates a framework to evaluate criteria of fairness and effectiveness in public participation in planning.

### **3.5 EVALUATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING: FAIRNESS**

#### **3.5.1 Adequate Opportunity**

One of the important criteria for evaluating fairness in public participation is that of *adequate opportunity*, which includes the consideration of many factors (Octeau, 1999). Adequate opportunity is an assessment from the point of view of an individual or group being given enough opportunities for each person to protect and express legitimate interests and contribute to the development of consensus for a planning decision (Renn et al., 1993). Individuals in a group must be able to initiate actions that enable them to accomplish their legitimate goals, whatever the nature of their representation in the participation process (Webler and Renn, 1995). In a fair participation process, participants must feel empowered and valued for making recommendations and evaluating the rationale of others assertions on planning and development matters (Webler, 1995). Octeau (1999) notes that participants will feel empowered once they are given sufficient and good-quality of information. Sufficient information is needed to understand all the factors in the continuing issues of planning (Webler et al., 2001); and the quality of information is important so that the participants can understand the terms and definitions used in the planning documents. The sufficiency and quality of information may be measured through evaluation of whether enough information is given to the planning policy community and whether it is easy to understand.

Another factor of *adequate opportunity*, means the timing of consultation events, their announcement, and most importantly the time allocated for the participants to review planning proposals and make comments on them (Octeau, 1999). In this regard, a planning evaluation approach should address two important factors: the availability of the time given to participants for reviewing planning proposals, and the quality of the information provided to them. To make a factual judgement, participants should have adequate access to planning documents: various planning Acts on landuse planning, design guidelines, and related data on current proposals.

The evaluation process should also address who has the most power and opportunity to influence the planning decisions. In any public participation process, different stakeholders have different levels of influence over decision-making process (Abbott, 1996; Ochteau, 1999; Dickinson, 1999; Webler and Tuler, 2000), although some believe that equalizing the amount of power to influence the final outcomes is the major criterion for evaluating the fairness of public participation (Abbott, 1996; Ochteau, 1999). To evaluate this criterion, all discourse participants should be asked to evaluate their understanding of influence in the final decision-making and to identify the position of all the planning policy community in the decision-making process; this will give an indication of who has the greater influence on the planning decisions.

Three sub-criteria have been identified for evaluating the criterion of 'adequate opportunity': there should be equal opportunity to participate meaningfully; everyone should have equal access to information; and all should have an equal opportunity to influence the final decision.

### 3.5.2 Early Involvement

One aspect frequently discussed in the public participation literature is the stage at which the public should become involved in policy matters (Rowe and Frewer, 2000); the consensus seems to be that public participation should occur at the beginning rather than at the end (Middendorf and Busch, 1997). There should be a formal structure in which public and community groups should be involved to express their concerns on development applications. In general, 'scholars believe that to ensure meaningful stakeholders involvement, it must occur early, often, and [be] ongoing' (Brody et al., 2003: 250). The 'early, often, and on-going can create a sense of ownership over a plan's content and can reduce potential conflict over the long term, because those involved feel responsible for its policies' (Brody et al., 2003: 246). Thus, early involvement allows plan to reflect community views and preferences.

Two sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate the criterion of early involvement: everyone should have an opportunity to be involved during the conceptualization of the planning proposal; everyone should have an opportunity to be involved in inter-departmental planning meetings.



### 3.5.3 Representation

It is important to draw a distinction between *representing interests* and *being representative of interests*, when evaluating a participation process (Petts, 2001). For representation on a planning committee, the participation process should make considerable efforts to select individuals who may be representative of a wide range of interest in the community, rather than people simply representing some self-selected subset (Tuler and Webler, 1999). Particular caution should be exercised with regard to marginalized segments of the community or recruitment of intelligent, motivated people with legitimate interests in planning and development (Rowe and Frewer, 2000), so recruitment of participants should focus on personal activities that might indicate an interest. To ensure a fair representation, possibly affected communities and individuals should be included in the consultation process, but consideration should be given to recruiting non-professional planning experts who are not planners by profession, but are involved with planning and design matters or have shown interest in the planning process; these should be either selected or appointed using the planning agency's discretionary power.

It is assumed that commenting on development applications requires understanding of planning laws and Acts, most importantly understanding of development approvals, without a working knowledge of which a participant cannot make informed comments on development applications. Similarly, proponent of development should also be represented in the planning meetings to give their views. Rowe and Frewer (2000) note that one approach to achieving good representation for a regular advisory committee is to select a stratified sample from the affected community; they comment that the appearance of any bias in sampling may undermine the credibility of the committee (Rowe and Frewer, 2000).

Only one sub-criterion has been proposed to evaluate the criterion of representation that includes all the planning policy community: the approach should ensure greater representation from all the planning policy community.

### 3.5.4 Agenda and Minutes

Agenda setting is much the same as defining the problem (Webler, 1995). Webler (1995) broadly generalized this criterion as internal fairness based on some process criteria that

are usually followed in the discussion, such as roles in agenda setting, determination of moderators and agreement on discussion, operational procedures and final decision-making procedures within the planning committee. However, this does not mean that everyone should necessarily play an active role in making the agenda. Webler (1995) has noted that an agenda can unfairly influence the ensuing discourse by not allocating ample time for discussion, or by framing a topic and putting an issue in such a way that most of the members will have no chance to contribute effectively on the particular development application. Other important issues, which Webler (1995) has not mentioned, have been raised regarding this criterion; they involve ensuring that all planning matters are included on the agenda.

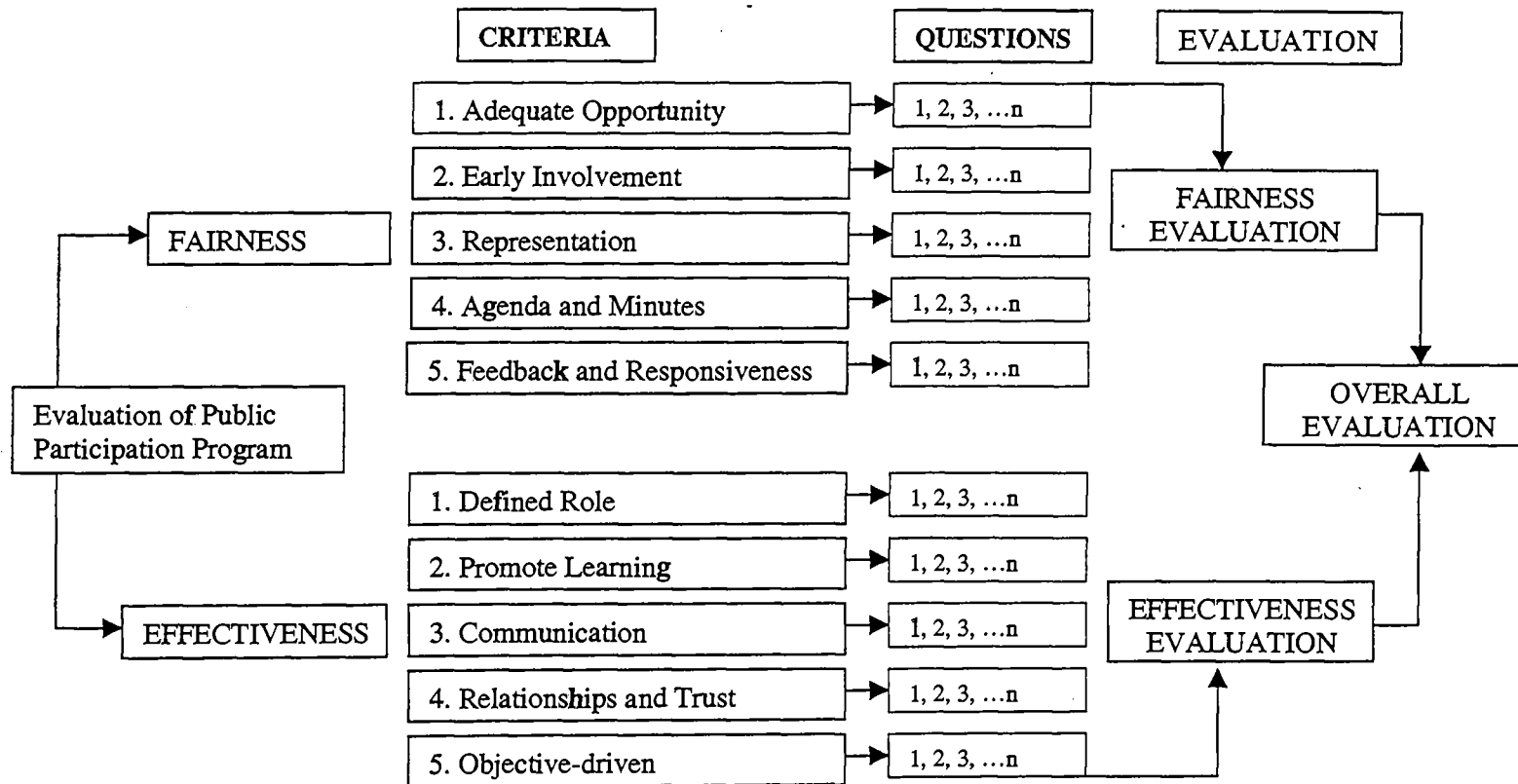
Four sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate this criterion: there should be provision for everyone to have the opportunity to define planning and development issues before formal development applications are lodged; all planning and development matters should be included in the meeting agenda; the meeting minutes should include comments from all planning stakeholders; and the minutes should be available for public perusal and should be distributed among planning stakeholders in good time.

### **3.5.5 Feedback and Responsiveness**

Feedback is an important issue for evaluating the fairness of a public participation process. This criterion examines the responsiveness to communication among all planning stakeholders, including planning agencies, development proponents, and other participants, in order to respond to each other's needs in such a way that all are satisfied with the actions. People participating in the consultation normally expect feedback from the implementing authority showing that they are being heard and their comments and advice are given adequate attention. The planning authority should also give the participants convincing reasons for rejecting or modifying their comments and advice.

Two sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate the criterion of feedback: feedback should be provided to the participants in the consultation process; explanations should be given to participants for the acceptance, rejection and modification of their recommendations.

Figure 3.1: A theoretical framework for evaluating public participation in planning



### **3.6 EVALUATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING: EFFECTIVENESS**

#### **3.6.1 Defined Role**

It is essential to ensure that there is as little confusion and dispute as possible regarding the scope and role of the stakeholders in the participation exercise (Landre and Knuth, 1993a). The roles of the various stakeholders can change with different approaches to public participation (Octeau, 1999); particularly in the case of stakeholders' committees, roles can vary and therefore must be clarified. For example, planning advisory committees consist of many people involved in planning policy, ranging from development proponents to residents and community groups. The use of experts for technical clarification, and to explain the government position on planning proposals, can support this type of planning committee; development proponents can also play a similar role. Sometimes, the planning agency may have discretionary power to nominate experts or enthusiastic individuals to the committee; the roles of those people who are implicitly or explicitly involved in the planning process should be clearly defined before the consultation activities begin (Cormick et al., 1996).

The criterion of 'defined role' should clearly illustrate the possible roles that may be played by the planning policy community in decision-making. All those involved in planning policy should also accept their defined roles in the consultation process. There should be a clear description of expected outcomes of the participation; as well as of the way the procedures work (Rowe and Frewer, 2000). All participants in the consultation process should have adequate understanding of their roles, their Terms of Reference, and related planning law and Acts. When members start their tenure, the planning agency should provide all members a guide with adequate description of their role and clear statement of the Terms of Reference; without a clear statement of their roles members may feel disempowered and disenfranchised (Octeau, 1999). The evaluation of this criterion should ascertain whether planning stakeholders are effectively playing their defined roles and participants should give their perceptions on whether the defined roles would lead to an effective consultation or require any changes.

Three sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate the criterion of defined role: well-defined Terms of Reference should be provided for the consultation process; Terms of Reference should define all stakeholders' roles in the planning decision; and all stakeholders should understand their roles clearly and succinctly.

### 3.6.2 Promote Learning

Public participation processes are learning opportunities for all participants (Octeau, 1999); they should be treated as a platform of interpersonal communication for sharing information, but not as a battleground for conflict of interests (Landre and Knuth 1993a). An effective participation process should therefore promote education and learning activities (Webler et al., 1995; Beierle 1998, 1999; Octeau, 1999). Once the participants are well-informed on process roles and the relevant planning law and Acts, through formal or informal learning activities, they can carry out the roles envisaged in major planning legislation for identifying violations of planning law, and whether development applications comply with the required design guidelines (Beierle, 1999).

Webler et al., (1995) note that participants come into a process with different hopes and expectations. But how do they learn while evaluating various development applications? It could either through formal or informal learning activities. The continuing learning process may change the attitude of participants as they learn from the process and each other. It can also help participants understand the concerns and values of other actors, which are culturally different. Over time, members who involved in a participation process are likely to understand the assertions made by planners, development proponents and technocrats. They are also likely to understand the assertions made by fellow members. This informal knowledge acquired by the long time participants increases the competence understanding of participation processes, which play an important role in evaluating planning initiatives, but those long time participants may not continue in a participation process for a long time. Thus, participants who have just started their tenure with the process, require formal introduction of the process to make them understand about the process, and planning decisions.

In the context of the stakeholders' committee, the planning agency should organize planning workshops and orientation programs to introduce salient features of the existing planning law, Land Act, design guidelines and the procedures for development approval. The introduction of orientation programs will help the participants to understand planning legislation and identify any violations of planning law by development proponents, so they will gain sufficient knowledge of planning and development approval. This will enable them to deliberate issues and formulate alternatives to the development proposals.

To achieve this goal, and to enable participants to understand planning law and the process of development approval, the planning authority should use accessible language in planning documents. To evaluate this criterion it is important to know how many participants were actively involved in promoting learning or took advantage of the information and access provided to them.

Four sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate the criterion of promote learning: there should be effective outreach programs for the participants; introducing planning law and design guidelines that are essential for compliance with planning proposals; participants should have personal motivations to learn about the process; and there should be a clear plan that includes ways in which the participants can learn about the process.

### **3.6.3 Communication**

In most community studies, communication is an integral part of the community development process (Ashford, 1984). There are some mechanisms normally adopted by the planning authority to communicate with the rest of the policy community; accordingly, government agencies have used a variety of methods of communicating in sharing relevant planning and design information with the stakeholders (Dandekar, 1982). But the question is: how effective have they been? Does the participant effectively respond to the planning information provided in development applications? Communication of the planning information becomes an important criterion for making informed comments on planning proposals. Citizens who are involved in the planning process often face difficulties in understanding spatial data, which may be in the form of digital or paper products displayed in maps and plans (Obermeyer, 1998). Misapprehension of the spatial data and complications in understanding can lead to mistrust amongst planning stakeholders (Craig and Elwood, 1998). Without effective communication and understanding of planning information, the participants cannot make informed comments. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have recently been used for the public participation process to establish effective communication with spatial information among the planning policy community (Craig et al., 1999).

It is apparent that planning participants are dealing with planning and development matters and regularly discussing development applications. The development applications are accompanied with maps and plans, so development proponents bring maps and drawings to almost every consultation meeting. But are the participants able to respond effectively to

displayed maps and plans? Do they understand what the developer presents? Do participants have adequate understanding of plans? How is geographic information brought to participants for making comments on it? How are maps, plans, tables and spatial information given to the participants? In addition, the planning agency should make use of Internet facilities for communicating with their planning stakeholders; the Internet and other forms of electronic communication become effective modes of providing relevant information to the stakeholders, thus creating an effective communication (Kingston et al., 2000).

Three sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate the criterion of communication: a process should be provided for communication among all planning stakeholders; there should be a formal structure for communication between the planning agency and planning stakeholders; there should be appropriate ways to use, and display geographic information for effective communication.

#### **3.6.4 Relationships and Trust**

In most of the literature the criteria of relationship, trust and conflict of interests are discussed separately; however, these three criteria could be merged for analyzing a consultation process (Raimond, 2001). In analysing the positive aspect of these three criteria, it would be seen that good relationships among the stakeholders would reduce conflict. On the other hand, if the relationships are adversarial and hostile, the consultation will reduce trust among the participants, leading to conflict over the issues (Raimond, 2001). In almost all conversations between government staff and citizens, lack of trust or a perceived lack of trust in government agencies was raised as a cause for conflict (Long and Beierle, 1999). The absence of trust can cause the committee members to question many aspects of government decision-making, including the result of the planning and design assessment of a particular development application. Distrust among the members generates an adversarial relationship with each other that often causes conflict among them on planning decisions.

All planning stakeholders should have amicable relationships with each other, respect others' views and be prepared to accept the reasons for other people's assertions. They should also have to resolve conflict over decisions in an amicable way. Discourse participants must include people from diverse backgrounds, such as resident's community leaders, business people and agency representatives. All are engaged in making comments on a particular

planning topic, and should established a trustworthy relationship and conflict-free environment.

Three sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate the criterion of relationship: there should be a responsive relationship among planning stakeholders; there should be a congenial atmosphere free from personal attacks; trust should be established towards the chairperson conducting consultation meetings.

### **3.6.5 Objective-driven**

The introduction of public consultation processes for planning purposes is driven by the objectives of authorities (Octeau, 1999); however, a planning authority may implement only the objectives and political promises of a government. In this situation, the planning authority may be seen as an implementing authority for those promises, not an independent authority to recommend planning approaches based on partnership between the community and agencies for the development and redevelopment of urban-areas. The planning and management in urban areas are ultimately a question of values, as planning approaches are based on values and priorities perceived by the government and their political promises (Troy, 1999). Over time, values and priorities may be changed, if the government is changed. However, the general objective of introducing public consultation in planning and development matters is to give the community a voice in the planning decision-making process and to ensure that planning and decision-making are subject to a process of public participation. Troy (1999) notes that a government may have a planning approach, which might not seen as appropriate by the succeeding government.

Similarly, planning participants may have different objectives and expectations from the consultation process; success in consultation process can be measured by the perceptions of the individuals involved in the process. Accordingly, all the planning policy community may have expectations and be required to evaluate their degree of satisfaction about achieving these expectations from the planning consultation process. Effectiveness evaluations are typically correlated closely with participants' satisfaction with the procedure and it outcomes (Lauber and Knuth, 1998). If respondents perceive the decision-making procedures as fair, they are more likely to perceive the decisions as fair (Lind and Tyler, 1988). Perceptions of procedural fairness are often correlated with satisfaction or support for the decision makers or authority responsible for a decision (Lauber and Knuth, 1999).



Two sub-criteria have been proposed to evaluate this criterion of 'objective-driven': the agency's objectives should be given to participants in the consultation process; there should be provision to regularly evaluate 'satisfaction with outcome' and 'satisfaction with process'.

### **3.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The evaluators of public participation processes have learned through experience to develop research designs that take into account the strengths and limitations of various evaluation approaches. This study suggests that planning agencies should not be restricted to existing methods of consultation, but allow methodological pluralism in evaluating their processes. Discussion of the various evaluation approaches, particularly theory-based and process-based approaches, indicates that evaluators need not select either theory-based criteria or process-based criteria evaluation articulated by the stakeholders, sponsors and planning agency personnel. Rather evaluators might focus on the development of methodological diversity and evaluation methods that can be adapted to the specific participation efforts. Planning advisory committees involve a variety of meetings that discuss development applications, communications among all the planning policy community and providing relevant information to the committee members for informed discussion; so a way is needed to gather feedback about planning meetings so that planning decisions can incorporate the input emerging from the discussion. However, the experience of evaluators of the consultation process suggests that evaluations do not necessarily lead to a structured solution; instead, some recommendations may gradually change the processes practiced. The proposed framework for evaluating public participation in planning may improve current practices more strategically and coherently. With this purpose in mind, the LAPAC has been selected as a case study.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The nature of the study problem indicates what type of method needs to be used (Field and Morse, 1991). The aim of this study is to explore individual perceptions of a particular process in order to evaluate its context and operational process; in such instances a case study approach is particularly appropriate. Yin (1994: 4) notes that case study research focuses on unique and contemporary events, but does not attempt to generalize its observations to universal truths. Instead, information about a particular process is used to modify larger theoretical questions, or to refine or readjust existing processes. This study focuses on the LAPAC context and process to investigate theoretical questions about the ways the consultation process is carried out, and to question its fairness and effectiveness in planning decisions.

The analysis of the methodological literature suggests that qualitative research enables researchers to observe and uncover the meaning of individual perceptions on the issues with which people are involved. The focus of qualitative research is on the participants' perceptions and experiences, and the way they make sense of their lives (Creswell, 1994). The attempt therefore is to understand not one, but multiple realities of a contemporary process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Considering the need for qualitative data, this study uses a multiple-method approach similar to that of Kaufman (1999) and Elwood (2000). The method is mainly based on the case study approach. However, the rationale of using the multi-method approach is that it generates multiple chains of evidence and the possibility of 'triangulation' of data (Yin, 1994), which is generated by document analysis, participant observation and in-depth interviewing (Elwood and Leitner, 1998; Elwood, 2000).

The chapter begins with an explanation for selecting the qualitative methodology that guided the design of the research techniques, and a description of case study selection. This is followed by a review of data collection techniques and description of interview design. Finally, the process of data analysis is elaborated.

## 4.2 SELECTION OF METHODS

It is necessary to consider what methods and data collection techniques are pertinent to the research objectives and hypothesis (Rahnema, 1992). Many techniques are available for investigation of public participation, and each contributes distinct benefits in understanding research problems and objectives (Sanoff, 2000), which require several different data sources to analyse and structure them (Creswell, 1998). For example, consulting the residents and community about whether they feel their advice has been given adequate consideration in planning decisions, requires qualitative data from various sources, such as interviews with the participants in the consultation process, qualitative and quantitative documentary data, observation in the planning meetings and the available literature on resident and community views of public participation (Creswell, 1994).

Multiple methods can be useful for gathering data from the various sources (Elwood, 2000); Kaufman (1999) notes that the multi-method approach has numerous benefits. Many authors also advocate using multiple-method techniques to obtain a holistic picture of the issue being studied, and this approach enables the researcher to link past and present situations, and explore individual perceptions to compare them with existing situations (Berg, 1989; Reinhartz, 1992). For instance, the present researcher has encountered difficulty in getting information on LAPAC's past history. No written documents are available on the history of LAPAC, which was introduced in Canberra in 1995, except for few comments made by the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). The comments are recorded in the resolutions of the Assembly, but the written comments of MLA would not adequately reflect the underlying causes for introducing a means of planning input in planning and development matters. Thus, the researcher had to find participants and planners involved in the days when LAPAC was first introduced in the ACT.

### 4.2.1 Qualitative Approach

The selection of a suitable approach for this study began with a survey of the literature followed by a decision whether to employ qualitative or quantitative methods. The main source of data for this study is qualitative, since qualitative data collection techniques such as interviewing, participant observation, and document analysis were deemed to be appropriate techniques for this study. As explained in the Chapter One, analysing

individual perceptions of the participation process is complex; it requires qualitative precision to realize the participants' perceived understanding on consultation process and its influence to planning decisions. In this regard, Patton (1990) notes that the qualitative strategy used in the participation process is largely determined by the purpose of the study, the nature of research objectives and the skills and resources available to the investigator; he also states that qualitative inquiry is highly appropriate in studying *process*, because depicting process requires detailed descriptions of individuals involved in the processes over a period of time (Patton, 1990).

Participation through a planning advisory committee is an individual experience for participants based on a group setting. To explore and capture such individual perceptions on a particular consultation process, this study followed the qualitative approach for data gathering and data analysis; the method chosen for this study involved making choices between five qualitative approaches, the phenomenological, ethnographic, constructivist, grounded theory and case study approaches. A phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experience for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The intent of ethnographic research is to obtain a holistic picture of the subject of study with in-depth interviewing and participant observation (Burawoy, 1991). Constructivist research relates to constructing a theory from existing field situations (Lewins, 1993). Grounded theory is similar to constructivist theory, requiring field data for identification of the factors to be analysed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The case study inquiry is based on a specific situation and analyses the individual perceptions of participants who are involved with the process and qualified to make comments on existing processes, and the outcome (Yin, 1994). This study is based on case study inquiry.

#### **4.2.2 Case Study Inquiry**

Case study inquiry is a distinctive form of empirical inquiry (Yin, 1994). Thus, a case may be a person, a group, a program, an event, an activity, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of social life (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 1994). 'Case studies may be used to illustrate an idea, explain the process of consultation over time, show the limits of generalizations, explore uncharted issues by starting with a limited case, and pose proactive questions' (Reinharz, 1992: 167). Yin (1994: 14), defined the case study as an empirical mode of inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-

life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; the case study copes with a technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and consequently relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion; and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection analysis.

In conducting case study research, the researcher must consider what type of case study is most promising and useful. This means 'the need for a decision, prior to any data collection, on whether a single-case study or multiple cases are going to be used to address the research questions' (Yin, 1994: 38). The strongest case study design involves the comparative study of two or more communities. Hakim (1987) noted that comparative case studies are a well-established design for research on local governments and policy process. However, every study is a case study because it is an analysis of social phenomena or an existing theory specific to time and place (Yin, 1994). Thus, there are several reasons for selecting a single case. First, 'single case can be based on experiment, and *many of the same conditions* that justify a single experiment also justify a single case study' (Yin, 1994: 38). On the other hand, a single case study design can also be applied to test a well-established theory and its current applicability. The theory may have a clear set of propositions, which are believed to be true. To understand, challenge, or to extend the theory, propositions may exist that meet all preconditions for testing the existing theory. A 'single case study can, thus, be used to determine whether the existing theory is correct or requires alternative arrangement to improve the existing process' (Yin, 1994: 38).

A second reason for selecting a single case study is one in which the 'case represents an *extreme or unique case*' (Yin, 1994: 39). A third reason for single case study research is the '*revelatory case*' (Yin, 1994: 40). This type of case study research depends on accessibility to the case where previous accessibility was restricted.

The above are the three major reasons for conducting a single case study inquiry. However, there are other situations in which single case study may be conducted, such as the conduct of a pilot case that involves more than one unit of analysis of the same case. Yin (1994: 41) termed this as 'embedded case studies', which occur when, within a single

case study, attention is also given to similar subunits of a case. However, the objection to single case study design is that a case may later turn out to differ from what it was thought to be at the outset (Yin, 1994). Thus, a careful investigation is required to 'minimize the chances of misrepresentation to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence' (Yin, 1994: 41). Therefore, single case study research should not commence unless those major concerns have been clearly covered (Yin, 1994).

This study is in the nature of a single case study. All LAPACs are run with a single set of Terms of Reference, and a single planning agency administers all consultation processes. Thus, LAPAC could be a single case study; however, it has six committees in various places with different names, which perform the same roles on planning and development matters. These committees are unique cases compared to other advisory committees, in NSW and elsewhere in Australia. In NSW and its various City Councils, the advisory committees are formed with elected council members, along with others whom the City Mayor feels should be on the committees.

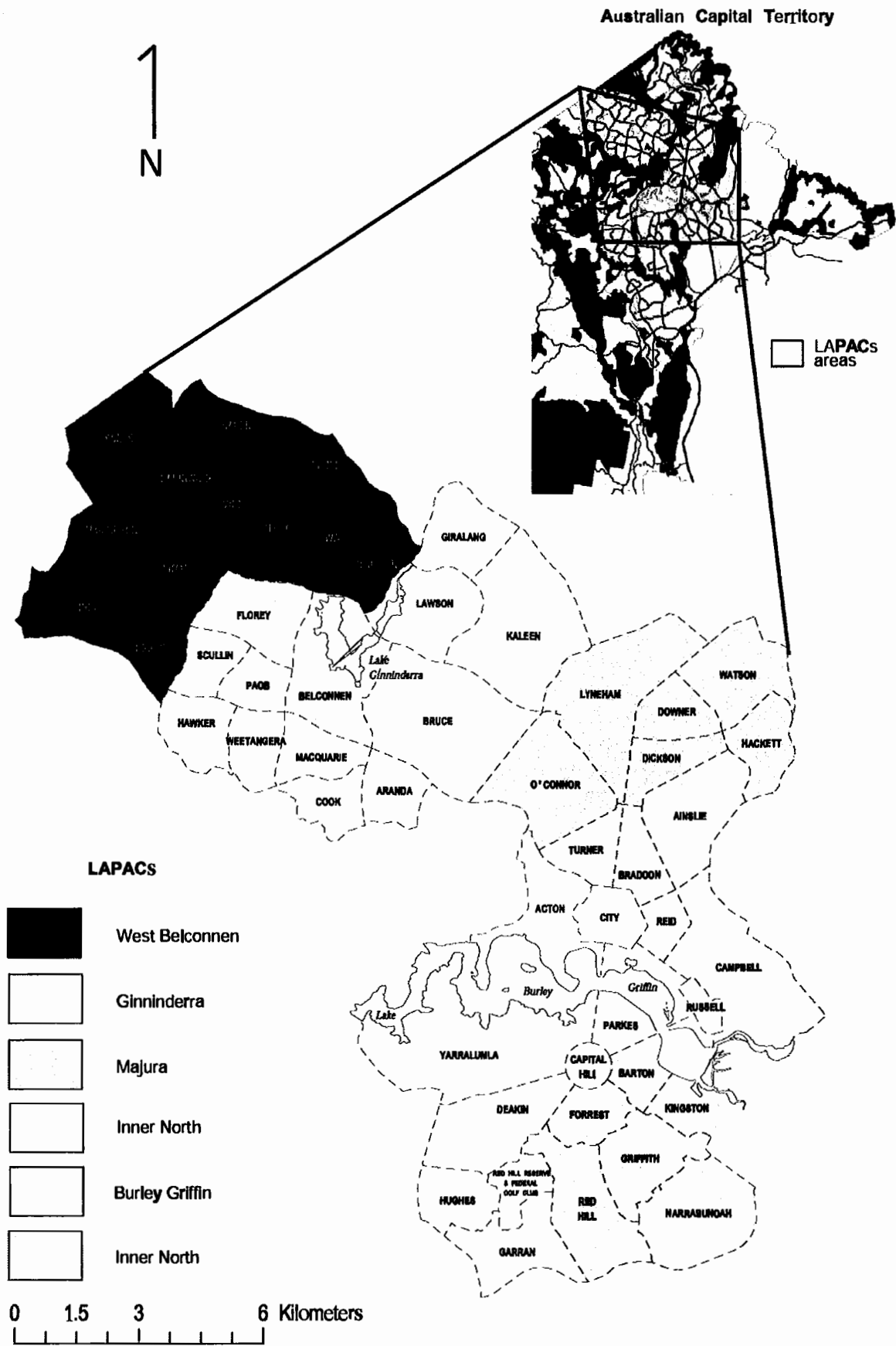
#### *Selection of LAPAC as case study inquiry*

Choosing a case for study is probably one of the hardest parts of conducting any research either qualitative or quantitative (Tutty et al., 1996). Some pertinent issues are required for the selection of cases regardless of whether the study is single case or multiple cases. An ideal case is one in which entry is possible; there is a mix of the process, people, programs, interactions and structures of interest; the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with participants of the study; and the data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

The selection of the LAPAC is based on these guidelines. The researcher attended LAPAC meetings from 1998; as an academic staff members of some units entitled 'Urban Systems A, B and C', the researcher attended several meetings accompanied by students. Besides, this researcher has considerable experience in assisting students on topics related to public participation in urban planning, design and development.

There are six LAPACs in Canberra (Figure 4.1): Burley Griffin, Manuka, Ginninderra, West Belconnen, Inner North, and Majura. These six LAPACs are established in Central Canberra and in Belconnen areas only, where redevelopment pressure is believed to be very high. There are no LAPACs in the other three urban districts as those districts are

Figure 4.1: Six LAPACs areas



Source: Compiled from Department of Urban Services (2002)

relatively new and have not yet undergone extensive urban revitalization programs compared to Central Canberra and Belconnen areas. However, any Development Applications lodged with planning authority in those three urban districts are usually referred to local resident associations and community councils for a consultation on the Development Application.

A LAPAC is a committee of residents, business people and representatives from community groups who advise the Minister for Planning on planning and development matters. LAPAC was introduced in September 1995, in the hope of involving the community in consultation about the matters affecting them directly or indirectly (PALM, 2000b). The structure of the committee is as follows.

1. Two people per suburb: one elected, the other appointed by a residents' group, if one exists in Belconnen LAPACs, one person per suburb is elected or one residents' group nominee.
2. One person elected by business interests per suburb, three people in the Belconnen LAPAC areas.
3. One person nominated by the North Canberra Community Council, Manuka Residents Group or the Belconnen Community Council.

The Minister may appoint up to four additional persons, if necessary, to balance the areas of interest on the committee and cater for all sections of the community. The role of the committee is to comment on the broad planning directions for their communities. This is done through their development of Community Value Statements (CVS), and by commenting on Territory Plan Variations, Section Master Plans and other important planning initiatives that may affect the planning and character of their neighbourhoods (PALM, 2000a). One vital task is to develop and maintain CVS for their areas. The Community Value Statements will define the community's aspirations for the future development of their area and will provide a framework for LAPACs to consider matters that are referred to them. The planning officers also use CVS, when assessing the development applications. The committee members draft the CVS in consultation with the community they represent; draft copies of the CVS are provided to members of the community for feedback and comment (PALM, 2000a).



Other aspects referred for comments include publicly notifiable applications for commercial, retail, industrial, community and multi-unit residential developments (excluding dual and triple occupancies), preliminary environmental assessments and other major urban developments affecting the area (PALM, 2000a). LAPACs meet once a month to discuss the issues referred to them and provide advice on planning and development issues; the meetings are open to all the public. The terms of reference indicate that the committee's role is advisory, and members assist the planning agency for decision-making. The term of appointment to the committee is two years, and the Minister may extend this for another term. Election of the committee members is open to all and eligibility of the members is minimal: persons over eighteen years can be either residential or business representatives, if they can show proof of either residence or a business establishment or business interests in the suburbs covered by LAPAC. There is no other formal requirement to be nominated for the committee.

Every committee has a convener to chair the meeting, elected by the existing members. There is a coordinator for all six LAPACs, who takes notes at meetings and organizes meetings and other related activities. The coordinator is a regular PALM employee and is occasionally replaced by others. A planner (Technical Officer) attends every meeting to discuss planning procedures and represents the planning agency in the consultation process. A LAPAC member can only be a member of a LAPAC and hold only one position on the committee. The committee members will be elected for a term of two years that may be extended by the Minister for Planning. The role of the Minister for Planning are to continue support the existence of LAPACs in Canberra; to meet all convenors regularly; and to encourage all ACT Government agencies to consult with LAPACs on pertinent issues (PALM, 2000b: 2).

Besides providing comments through the established process on specific planning and development matters, the Minister for Planning meets with all convenors at least three times a year. At these meetings general issues, policy and procedures may be discussed. Convenors are encouraged to solicit input from committee members for these meetings. The areas covered by each LAPAC are shown in Figure 4.1.

### *Selection of research participants*

One of the most significant issues a researcher has to consider in designing a research project is the type and number of the respondents included in the study. Selecting participants in any qualitative or quantitative research is critically important. In focused interviews, participants generally are chosen on the basis of experience related to the research topic; Swenson et al., (1992) refer to this as 'purposeful sampling'. Since the aim of this study is to explore individual perceptions of the consultation process, the experience of the participants is required for making comments on the criteria it is proposed to evaluate through the LAPAC consultation process. Planning professionals and others in the policy community attend the meetings to gain experience of the consultation process. This study approached LAPAC members who had considerable experience in the procedures and had been members of the committee for at least a year; this was ascertained through the LAPAC coordinator who had contact lists of all members. Experienced members of the wider public, planning staff, the executive director of PALM, spokespersons of political parties and the Minister for Planning were also selected as research participants in this study.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 199), 'all sampling is done with some purposes in mind'. This study used purposeful sampling to seek out experienced respondents to comment on the proposed criteria for evaluating the fairness and effectiveness of public participation in planning; this sampling technique allowed the researcher to select experienced members for an in-depth investigation of the consultation process, and enabled the researcher to select members who had either resigned from the committee or did not stand for in election for another term. The interviews for the study were begun in May 2001, during the LAPAC election. The new members were not selected for the interview, as they had no experience of making comments on the overall consultation process, and had attended only a couple of meetings. The enthusiastic wider public who often attend the meetings and have interests in planning matters were also formally interviewed in order to receive their feedback on satisfaction with the existing consultation process. The wider public are those who are actively involved with local planning issues through responding to development applications, attending LAPAC meetings, lobbying government and initiating petitions and protests in various community forums. A local newspaper, which has two versions, *The Belconnen Chronicle* (changed to *The Northside Chronicle* in July 2003) and *The Southside Chronicle*, played an

important role in selecting members of the wider public, including the names and contact details of those actively involved in local planning issues. Some of these initial contacts became key informants, directing contact to others in the local community, who in turn directed this researcher to other members of the wider public. This is often referred to as the snowball sampling technique. When using this technique, one should take care to avoid bias towards selecting similar groups or one perspective. This was avoided by briefly surveying potential interviewees about their affiliation with the local community and their political involvements before selection for an interview. In most cases, the wider public were very vocal about their views and the views of people to whom they directed this researcher. The continuing urban redevelopment program was a major issue for many of them.

Planning professionals were also interviewed. Interviews were held with the planners involved in the LAPAC consultation process, and the PALM Executive Director was interviewed separately. The Minister for Planning was interviewed just before the Territory election in October 2001, when the Minister was the shadow minister for planning. The research participants are enumerated in Table 4.1.

### **4.3 DATA COLLECTION**

As discussed earlier, data collection for case studies can rely on many sources of evidence. Yin (1994: 78) identified six important sources for the case study inquiry: 'documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts'. However, data collection for case studies is more complex than the processes used in other research strategies. Six sources can be divided into three broad techniques of qualitative data collection: document analysis, participant observation, and focus interviewing.

#### **4.3.1 Document Analysis**

Analysis using existing documents is a technique of data collection in qualitative research, which can be combined with the other data-gathering techniques such as interviews and observations (Yin, 1994). The collection of documentary data was important for this study, and consisted of community value statements, minutes of

meetings, agendas, correspondence, newspaper articles on current development applications, and resolutions of the ACT Legislative Assembly on the establishment of

**Table 4.1: Summary of interviews**

The research participants	Number of participants interviewed
LAPAC members (including former members)	
1) Ginnindera LAPAC	10
2) West Belconnen LAPAC	13
3) Inner North LAPAC	9
4) Majura LAPAC	11
5) Manuka LAPAC	11
6) Burley Griffin LAPAC	8
Wider Public and Spokesperson of Political Parties	14
Planning Staff	6
Minister for Planning	1
Executive Director of PALM	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>

LAPAC in 1995. Some documents such as meeting minutes, the LAPAC Guide and the LAPAC Protocol were collected before the interviews were held. Reviewing these documents familiarized the researcher with the overall context and process of consultation and planning decisions.

Newspaper articles on the consultation and planning process published in *The Canberra Times*, *The Belconnen Chronicle* and *The Southside Chronicle* were also used in this study, and individual letters and emails sent to PALM commenting on planning issues were referred to. Members' own letters, which they had retained and circulated at meetings, were collected from the LAPAC coordinator. Members of the wider public often attend the meetings with their written documents for making submissions on particular development applications, which were also collected from LAPAC coordinator and used in this study.

However, the vast majority of documents used in this study were meeting agendas and minutes. These are archived on the website <http://www.palm.act.gov.au/lapac>. The period from 2000 to the present was examined as there were no archival records of previous meeting minutes at PALM or on the website. The researcher took notes from the Minister's letters, normally sent to committees, addressing many planning issues and indicating the government position. Most of the committee members seemed happy to pass on all the documents in the white folder provided by planning authority for documents and correspondences. Some of them gave unrestricted access to the white folder and the researcher received much information on the consultation process.

These various archival records illustrate the kinds of community consultation currently practiced in ACT, and also given some indications of how the planning decisions have made. Most importantly, meeting minutes provide an opportunity to examine the comments of individual members and their agreements or disagreements on planning proposals.

#### **4.3.2 Participant Observation**

Observation is one of the oldest methods of data collection; it means looking at an object or situation with a purpose (Sarantakos, 1998). Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that observation entails a process of systematic noting, recording events and behaviour in the social setting chosen for the study.

Observations were carried out in this study by attending LAPAC meetings, planning workshops and residents' association meetings. The researcher has attended various consultation meetings since July 1998. Between July 1998 and November 2000, the researcher attended meetings occasionally to assist undergraduate students in carrying out their assignments. From January 2001 to November 2002, the researcher attended 32 meetings across all LAPACs. Apart from the scheduled LAPAC meetings, the researcher also attended other consultation meetings of the Turner Residents Association, Old Narrabundah Community Council, Belconnen Community Council, and Planning for ACT Together (PACTT). The researcher also attended other consultation events regularly, including Neighbourhood Planning Workshops, Canberra Spatial Plan Workshops and Workshops on Community Needs Assessment.

An observation checklist was used to record the important events, situations and phenomena observed during the meetings. This direct observation enabled the researcher to compare and verify the responses collected through interviews with all those involved in planning policy.

#### **4.3.3 Interviewing**

The interview is a method of collecting information about a person, upon a specific topic, through an organized oral communication between two persons (Soubashi, 1998). Maccoby and Maccoby (1954: 499, cited in Dunn, 2000: 51) defined an interview as 'a face-to-face verbal exchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another persons'. An interview is a data gathering method in which there is a spoken exchange of information, and requires some form of direct access to the person being interviewed (Dunn, 2000).

There are three major forms of interviewing: structured, unstructured and focus or semi-structured interviews (Dunn, 2000). The structured interview is used for the measurement of phenomena such as behaviour, attitudes, opinions, values, social characteristics, social conditions, relations, and preferences of individuals on certain options. The information can be quantified on the basis of the coded answers and may produce data for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The unstructured interview is used for revealing insights on a research topic or for explaining unexpected findings. It can be used either in exploring a broad problem, or identification of components of a general question (Soubashi, 1998). Another category of unstructured interview is the focused or semi-structured interview. Focused interviews are used either as part of a more quantitatively-oriented structured interviewing model, or qualitatively-oriented in-depth interviewing model (Minichiello et al., 1995). This form of interviewing is focused on issues that are central to the research objectives and questions, but the types of questioning and discussion allow for greater flexibility than does the survey-style interview (Minichiello et al., 1995). Thus, the semi-structured focus interview produces data on the insights, attitudes, perceptions and opinions of individuals. The primary objective of the focused interview is to elicit as complete a report as possible of what was involved in the experience of the particular situation (Yin, 1994).

Given the strengths and weaknesses of various interviewing techniques, the focused interview is flexible in structuring both open-ended and close-ended questions, and enables researchers to obtain both qualitative and quantitative information. This study used focused interview techniques for exploring the experiences of LAPAC members and others in the planning policy community.

### *The focused interview*

The focused interview differs in several respects from other types of research interview, which may appear similar at first glance. It has distinguishing characteristics (Merton et al., 1990); first, 'the persons interviewed are known to have been involved in a *particular situation*; they have worked in the same office building, lived in the same neighborhood, or taken part in an uncontrolled but observed social situation, such as a resident associations' meeting, a street demonstration, a community council meeting or a design review session on any development applications' (Zeisel, 1984: 139). It is called 'focused interview' because it focuses on a specific topic, which respondents are asked to discuss, providing their views and opinions on research objectives (Sarantakos, 1998). More particularly, the interviewer introduces a stimulus related to an issue with which participants are familiar, and discusses these issues with them. In a more general sense, it is a semi-structured interview (Sarantakos, 1998). In brief, the *focus interview* is focused on the subjective experiences of persons involved in a particular situation (Zeisel, 1984).

The focused interview can be used either with individuals or in a group setting to obtain in-depth information on how people define and analyse a concrete situation, what they consider important about it, what effects they intend their actions to have, and how they feel about the situation (Zeisel, 1984). The individual interview involves an interviewer asking questions of a single individual in a quiet and private setting, and the focus group involves a collection of individuals answering the same questions together as a group (Soubashi, 1998). Focus groups are useful to reveal the opinions and thoughts of participants more effectively, when a group is socially and intellectually homogeneous (Merton et al., 1990). Given the strength of the focus group interview, this study conducted formal individual semi-structured focus interviews instead of group interviews, because it was observed that some members in every LAPAC usually dominate the discussion and other members remain silent unless they are asked to respond. Merton et al., (1990: 148) refer to this as the 'leader effect': in most groups of people one or two

will inevitably emerge as louder, more dominant, or more opinionated. Therefore, the individual interview is easier to control, compared to the focus group interview.

### ***Rationale of focus interview for the study***

Evaluation of the public participation process relies heavily on the perceptions, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions of the participants. Minichiello et al., (1995) note that an individual's perception is influenced by past experiences, values, moods, social circumstances and expectations. In other words, an individual's understanding and belief about a situation are shaped by a variety of factors and may vary over time. Consequently, two individuals viewing the same situation may perceive it differently. Minichiello et al., (1995) also point out that individual perceptions cannot be measured directly, rather inferred from observing behaviour, or listening to what people say, so researchers must often rely upon interviews for the collection of necessary data about perceptions and viewpoints. In order to get data whether qualitative or quantitative, the interview method is perhaps one of the most common and effective ways to understand people's attitudes and perceptions (Fontana and Frey, 1994).

The survey technique could have been used, asking open-ended or structured questions about the form, functions, fairness, and effectiveness of a consultation process; but this would not have allowed for interaction between the respondents to clarify and explain questions and responses (Kvale, 1996). Thus, focus interviews were used in this study to obtain interview data from LAPAC members and others concerned with planning policy who have long been involved in consultation on planning and development in Canberra.

For these reasons, the researcher held interviews with LAPAC members and other in the planning policy community, with a number of predetermined criteria and question sets, but allowing sufficient time and flexibility to digress or probe beyond the answers to the standard questions. The purpose of the questions was to explore the perceptions on the proposed evaluative framework using two meta-criteria: fairness and effectiveness in the public participation process. This type of interview enables the researcher and the respondents to establish interpersonal relationships, to explore sensitive and unspoken issues and to address additional relevant issues as they may arise during the interview (Fontana and Frey, 1994).



In the 'fairness' section in the interview schedule, respondents were asked questions on the consultation process, which they interpreted giving examples from their own experience: more interestingly, they discussed their roles in decision-making. They were also asked to justify the present form of advisory committee and clarify its fairness process, and to determine perceptions as to whether the advisory committee was an effective system of public participation.

In the 'effectiveness' section, respondents were asked to discuss the way in which the consultation process operates. They were encouraged to describe the operational or functional problems faced, and the relationship between LAPACs and PALM and others in the planning policy community, as part of the larger planning process. All respondents were asked to provide their own perceptions on problems of the current LAPAC and the merits, if any, of their recommended process. To develop an understanding of an ideal consultation situation, those interviewed were asked their views of the categories that would refer to their past experience. This information was presented in many forms in order to recommend new criteria for evaluating public participation in planning.

#### *Form of the semi-structured focus interview*

The semi-structured focus interviews involved a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Questions were developed for each of the criteria selected for developing a theoretical framework as discussed in Chapter Three. An interview guide was purposefully designed to address the proposed criteria of fairness and effectiveness in public participation, but the form of the interview followed the basic focus interview strategies proposed in the methodology literature (Zeisel, 1984; Merton, et al., 1990; Foddy, 1993; Fontana and Frey, 1994). Before respondents answered questions, the objectives of the research were stated to them, and the researcher explained the criteria of fairness and effectiveness to avoid the differences in meaning between researcher and respondents, who were then asked to answer questions on the sub-criteria and other related questions. A drawback in using this technique is that those interviewing may comment on altogether different criteria; in such cases, the probing technique is advocated to bring the discussion back to the main criterion. After discussing many sub-criteria, the researcher used the interview guide to incorporate them into the main criterion that discussed before.

A letter from the thesis supervisor was required to obtain contact details of all members. On showing the letter to the LAPAC coordinator, the researcher obtained contact details of both former and current members. Current members were initially approached for an interview just after the LAPAC meeting, but most were contacted by telephone and asked to set a time and place for the interview. Most of the interviews with residents and community representatives were held in their homes, but a few residents and business members preferred to meet at their offices and local coffee shops; some came in the researcher's office.

The initial interviews were held face-to-face, but some respondents were subsequently telephoned, when required to clarify comments and opinions on specific criteria. Interviews were continued between one and two hours; most were completed in one hour. Two exceptionally long interviews with LAPAC conveners took three hours to complete. Follow up interviews in person or by telephone were continued from ten minutes to one hour.

As the purpose of the interviews was to obtain an understanding of attitudes and perceptions, the order of the questions was not important; during each interview there were opportunities for open discussion on many different issues and concerns related to consultation and the decision-making process. The focus interview allows the researcher to be flexible and change the question order and the wording of the criteria to be covered (Kvale, 1996). Sometimes the researcher asked questions at appropriate times during the conversation; in this way, some new issues and concerns were introduced into the analysis and evaluation of each criterion.

The relationship between interviewer and respondents is often critical to the collection of opinions and perceptions; if they know each other, the respondent is likely to be communicative (Dunn, 2000). Goode and Hatt (1982) warned that interviewers should remain detached and aloof from the persons interviewed but the interviewer must introduce himself at the beginning of the conversation. This researcher described his role and purpose of interviews, and gave an assurance that respondent anonymity would be preserved. However, some business representatives held the impression that this research would only focus on resident and community views and would undermine the views of development proponents, probably because the researcher was introduced by conveners

who often represented either residents or community groups. The business people were reassured by the information that the study would accommodate the concerns of the whole planning policy community, not just the residents.

### *Recording interviews*

The entire interview was conducted by this researcher and was tape-recorded, although some notes were also taken. Tape-recording and note taking are the two main techniques for recording interviews (Dunn, 2000); this study mostly used tape-recording and notes were only taken to identify which criteria a respondent was discussing. Before commencing interviews, the researcher asked for permission to use the tape recorder; some respondents were reluctant to give this permission and in these cases only notes were taken. Others agreed to the use of the recorder and even allowed their names to be used, but names were changed, where appropriate, to ensure respondents' anonymity. Sometimes, respondents asked for the recorder to be stopped when they were explaining some important events, which they termed 'off the record'.

Both tape recording and note taking have advantages and disadvantages. A recorder can record whole conversations, while note taking requires shorthand-writing skills to produce verbatim records. However, the primary aim in note taking is to capture the gist of what is said (Dunn, 2000), so notes were taken only for this purpose and to identify the criteria. An additional advantage of tape recording was that it allowed the researcher more time to organize the next question and to maintain the flow of conversation without any break.

### *Ethical considerations*

The University Ethics Committee approved this study on the basis of a proposal previously approved by the Divisional Higher Degree Research Committee. The study was based on data obtained from interviews that were personal experiences and opinions of a particular process. These opinions were often expressed emotionally, and since LAPAC members are known in the ACT, the confidentiality and anonymity of their comments and individual identification was a major concern. Kvale (1996) has identified three ethical guidelines for maintaining confidentiality and anonymity in human research: informed consent, confidentiality and consequences. Informed consent entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the study, possible risks and benefits of

participation in this study, and the right to withdraw at any time during the interview. Confidentiality in research implies that it will maintain anonymity. The consequences of an interview study need to be addressed with respect to possible harm to the subjects as well as the expected benefits of participating in the study. The researcher maintained these three ethical considerations. All interviewees were briefed about the purpose of the study and asked whether they wanted their comments to remain confidential; most were happy for their actual names and comments to be recorded. Only a few did not want their names to be mentioned. However, the researcher has decided that the identity of all interviewees will remain anonymous.

### *Group interviews*

A more formal approach to group interviews is known as the focus group (Morgan, 1997); the focus interviewing technique is as useful with groups as with individual respondents (Zeisel, 1984). This researcher mainly carried out individual interviews, but some informal group interviews were held with LAPAC members and members of the wider public without formal arrangements of date and time. These occurred after the close of meetings when members sat around a table outside the meeting room and discussed the issues covered in the meetings; the researcher took the opportunity to participate in the discussion. For example, when the LAPAC members discussed the responsibility of PALM staff to give them adequate feedback, the researcher asked them to give examples of delayed feedback and insufficiency of information. All the members round the table made comments on the overall feedback system in the LAPAC consultation process, and these were recorded.

Some PALM planning staff were interviewed individually and some as a group; the group interviews were necessitated by the time constraints for PALM staff. They were agreed for an interview together, but agreements and disagreements were recorded and subsequently analysed.

### *Closing the interview*

Some preparations are required for the closure of an interview; otherwise the ending can be clumsy (Dunn, 2000). The ideal is 'to provide a summary, set post-interview goals, and exit gracefully' (Donaghy, 1984: 11). The interviews conducted for this study were ended in several ways: when respondents had agreed upon a specific time for completion,

the researcher tried ways to conclude the conversation. Some respondents appeared to want to talk on other topics at a later time; this was done if follow-up interviews were required. On the other hand, respondents were carefully observed to see whether they were eager to continue the discussion: looking at the clock or yawning indicated that it was time to end the interviews. It is important that the researcher should express not only thanks but also satisfaction with the material collected (Dunn, 2000), and also assures that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained.

#### 4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

There are many ways to analyse qualitative data. Creswell (1998) described approaches to qualitative data analysis within five traditions of inquiry: biography, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study (Creswell, 1998). In biography, 'a researcher begins analysis by identifying an objective set of experiences in the subject's life ... and develops a chronology of the individual's life' (Creswell, 1998: 146), and identifies factors that have shaped the individual's life. In phenomenological analysis, 'the researcher begins with a full descriptions of ... own experiences of the phenomenon' (Creswell, 1998: 147), describes individual experience with the topic emphasizes on the statements made by individuals on a particular process. The researcher then develops a list of non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements, and finally, 'constructs an overall description of the meaning and the essence of the experience' (Creswell, 1998: 155). Like phenomenology, 'grounded theory provides a procedure for developing categories of information (open coding), interconnecting the categories (axial coding), building a "story" that connects the categories (selective coding), and ending with a discursive set of theoretical propositions' (Corbin and Strauss, 1990: 7).

Ethnographic research is based on three aspects of data transformation for interpretation: description, analysis and interpretation of the culture-sharing group (Wolcott, 1994). The description may be analysed by presenting information in chronological order or narrator order; and the analysis involves highlighting specific material introduced in the descriptive phase through tables, charts, figures, and diagrams. The interpretation of the culture-sharing group is also a step in data transformation; in this context, the 'researcher draws inferences from the data or turns to theory to provide structure for his or her interpretations' (Wolcott, 1994: 44). As with ethnography, 'case study analysis consists

of making a detailed description of the case and its setting' (Creswell, 1998: 153), based on multiple sources of data such as 'documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts' (Yin, 1994: 78). Stake (1995) analyses four forms of data analysis and interpretation in case study research: categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, matching patterns and naturalistic generalization. In categorical aggregation, researchers collect examples from the data sources, in the hope of finding issue-related meanings. In direct interpretation, the researcher looks at a single example and draws meaning from it without looking at multiple examples. In pattern matching, the researcher looks for similarities or dissimilarities between two or more categories. Finally, in naturalistic generalization, the researcher analyses what the people can learn from the case study.

All the approaches mentioned above used the inductive data analysis method. Inductive analysis means that the patterns, text, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge from the data rather than being imposed on them from external sources based on theory (Patton, 1990). Most of the data collected in this study consists of texts: all sources yielded mainly textual data, in the form of literature on public participation in planning, planning reports from PALM, written submissions and transcribed interview data. The main sources were focus interviews, and observational notes taken during the LAPAC meetings and other planning workshops.

The common analyses of focus interview results involve transcribing audiotapes and field notes (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990); all transcribed data are organized under various headings, which should correspond broadly to the questions posed during the discussion (Krueger, 1994). All interviews were transcribed and coded according to the evaluative criteria discussed in Chapter Three. Once the entire interviews were completed and the supporting notes and documents had been obtained and reviewed, the criteria for the evaluative framework were applied: this involved the systematic identification of essential issues in the interview data, and relating them to the appropriate meta-criteria of fairness and effectiveness. Kvale (1996: 189) notes that 'qualitative data analysis requires separating data into parts or elements, a process which includes the categorization, condensation, structuring, and interpretation of meaning'. He proposed analysing qualitative data through six steps, which offer guidelines for qualitative researchers to

carry out qualitative research. The application of the evaluative framework used in this study followed Kvale's (1996: 189) six steps.

1. Subjects describe spontaneously what they experience, feel and do in relation to a topic.
2. Subjects themselves discover new meaning in what they experience and do. This process is free of interpretation by the researcher.
3. The researcher condenses and interprets the meaning of what the interviewee describes and 'sends' the meaning back. The conversation between researcher and interviewee continues until the interpretation is clear.
4. The researcher interprets the transcribed interview either alone or with other researchers. This process involves structuring information according to topics, clarifying material by eliminating superfluous information and developing the meaning of the interviews.
5. Interviewees are re-interviewed for further clarification.
6. Future interviews are altered based on new issues arising from earlier interviews.

In a broader sense, the aim of this research is to evaluate public participation in planning using the proposed criteria of fairness and effectiveness. According to Zeisel (1984), research that aims to explore the perceptions of individuals or groups in a particular situation, depicting the experiences in situational analysis, requires exploratory research with description and interpretative analysis. Using Kvale's approach the interview data, notes and supporting documents were combined to analyse the case study of LAPAC. However, step three and four, which required condensation, categorization, and structuring the information of textual data, have been analysed using the process of de-contextualization and re-contextualization of data proposed by Tesch (1990: 142-145).

#### **4.4.1 Data Analysis Procedures: de-contextualization and re-contextualization**

There may be several components in the discussion of the plan for analysing the data (Creswell, 1994). The process of data analysis is diverse; there is no 'right way' (Tesch, 1990). Data analysis requires that researchers should be comfortable with developing criteria or base lines to study their own objectives (Patton, 1990), and that they should be open to possibilities and see contrary or alternative explanations for the findings (Creswell, 1994). Patton (1990) notes that qualitative methods generate many data, which

researchers try to reduce to certain patterns, categories, or themes and then interpret the data by using some schema. Tesch (1990) called this process of organizing textual data 'de-contextualization' and 're-contextualization', and he proposed eight steps to systematically organize textual data. The present study used these eight steps (Tesch, 1990: 142-145):

1. Acquired a sense of segment of the whole text through transcribing the data from various sources.
2. Transcribed the representative interviews from all stakeholders and recorded topic descriptions above the text segments (paragraphs).
3. After examining all the recorded topics, created a master file, grouped the topic into evaluative criteria as proposed in Chapter Three, and divided them into the categories 'most related', 'moderately related' and 'loosely related'.
4. Abbreviated the topics as coded and wrote the codes next to the segments of text.
5. Used master list of codes and added other transcribed documents (meeting notes, transcription of minutes, and documents notes).
6. Created a new abbreviation list for each category and alphabetized these codes.
7. Assembled the data material belonging to each category in one place and performed a preliminary analysis.
8. Recoded the topics when necessary.

#### **4.4.2 Organizing Textual Data**

The first step involved transcribing the audiotapes, which produced 1169 pages of textual data. All transcribed data were divided into various text segments such as lines, paragraphs, and pages according to the criteria proposed to evaluate the public participation process: this process described as 'de-contextualization' (Tesch, 1990: 143). These textual data were merged with the other transcribed documents and field notes. Complete transcriptions of data are not included in this study, but relevant brief comments have been inserted. Each line, paragraph and page was related to the proposed criteria; paragraphs in particular were given code names corresponding to each criterion. Nodes were placed in each paragraph to identify the key quotations used in written materials: this helps to distinguish and to compare the diverse opinions of the planning policy community in order to identify their agreements or disagreements on many



planning issues. The transcription was then reread and the appropriate code written on the right margin highlighting words, sentences, and paragraphs related to each criterion.

Once all the text segments were identified in the right margin, a master list was created: this was helpful in identifying the text segments and various coded texts that were divided into the fairness and effectiveness criteria. Each criterion in the text segment was given an abbreviated code and all codes were applied to each of the remaining text segments where appropriate; this is referred to as 'tagging' or 'coding', and was done for each interview with the planning policy community, and merged with data from other sources such as documents and notes taken in meetings and workshops.

Once transcriptions were completed, a preliminary heading was given to each criterion, providing an understanding of the text units within the context of the entire interviews. An important element of data collection and analysis was the tagging and regrouping of individual submissions, the Minister's letters and other memos. All memos were manually coded and merged with those under various categories.

#### **4.4.3 Computer Software for Qualitative Data Analysis**

The assembled (re-contextualization) categories were imported into Nvivo, a computer program specially designed for qualitative data analysis. Other software such as NUDIST, Ethnograph, and ATLAS/ti, can also be used, and is particularly helpful when there is a large amount of transcribed material to be analysed (Cameron, 2000). Nvivo is new-generation software designed for research that needs combining the subtle coding with qualitative linking, shaping and modeling (Bazeley and Richards, 2000); it allows researchers to input field notes and recorded comments into the appropriate categories for organizing interview data into a rich text format file with necessary coding into the text by placing nodes in every paragraph (Bazeley and Richards, 2000).

The Nvivo software helped to sort the text segments, identify nodes in the paragraphs, and divide the paragraphs according to the criteria adopted for fairness and effectiveness analysis. It was useful in searching for key criteria within a large database of focus interview documents. Nvivo has tools for handling all these qualitative data, and supporting techniques to organize textual data derived from various sources. Though Nvivo is capable of coding all text segments, the researcher identifies the topic and codes

the text by hand: this process gives a control to identify text segments and organize transcription into the proposed criteria for the evaluation.

#### 4.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH

Without the use of trustworthy methods, research becomes fiction and loses its utility (Morse et al., 2002); thus increasing attention has been given to reliability and validity in all research methods. In a broader sense, reliability and validity address issues about the quality of data and appropriateness of methods used in conducting a research project (Mason, 1996). Reliability is one of the central concepts in assessing the quality and trustworthiness of the research. Reliability 'refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions' (Hammersley, 1992: 67). Validity addresses whether the research explains or evaluates what has been said would be explained and evaluated (Hammersley, 1992). Validity is another concept in assessing the quality and rigour of a research. According to Hammersley (1990: 57) validity means truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. This methodological rigour is significant in a study using qualitative design. Patton (1990: 462) notes that 'qualitative research has an obligation to be methodological in reporting sufficient details of data collection and the process of analysis to permit others to judge the quality of the resulting product'.

However, reliability and validity are particularly difficult to achieve in unstructured interviews (Donaghy, 1984: 233), because human experiences are unique, particularized and not always verifiable (Hall and Stevens, 1991). Therefore, there are concerns to the rigour of qualitative inquiry (Morse et al., 2002), and absence of quantitative numbers and *p* values, qualitative inquiry results in a lack of confidence from both inside and outside the field. However, a number of qualitative researchers (Leining, 1994; Altheide and Johnson, 1998) argue that reliability and validity are relevant to quantitative inquiry, but not to qualitative inquiry. Some have suggested adopting new criteria for determining reliability and validity and thus ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Leining, 1994; Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) replaced reliability and validity with the parallel concept of 'trustworthiness' for qualitative inquiry, involving four aspects: credibility,

transferability, dependability and confirmability. They see these categories as broadly equivalent to the concepts of validity, generalizability, reliability and objectivity that have been used to evaluate the quality of quantitative research endeavours.

#### 4.5.1 Credibility

This aspect involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible from the perspective of the participants in the research. Sandelowski (1986) followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria and commented that credibility in research could be claimed when it described the interpretation of people's experiences and their perceptions on a particular issue (Sandelowski, 1986). Lincoln and Guba (1985: 296) explained this in two ways: 'first to carry out the inquiry in such a way that the probability of findings should be creditable and second, to allow the respondents the chance to look at and evaluate the findings of the study'. Criteria for creditability of this research consist of prolonged engagement, topical observation, triangulation, referential adequacy and member checks.

*Prolonged engagement*, of the researcher for a long time is beneficial for prior familiarizing with the research topics and understanding the nature of the issues to be discussed and explained. Through this, a researcher can understand the authenticity of the responses given by the respondents, and build trust. This researcher has been attending LAPAC meetings since 1998, so his familiarity with the consultation process was particularly helpful in understanding it and establishing trust among all the planning policy community about the nature of this study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 304) noted that the aim of *topical observation* is to clearly identify the issues and criteria that it is proposed to analyze. The researcher took extensive notes during the meetings, which have been verified with the interview data. This opportunity enabled the researcher to identify relationships, conflicts and trusts among all those involved in planning policy.

The use of several data sources and different methods is called *triangulation*. The idea behind triangulation is that the more agreement of different data sources on a particular issue, the more reliable the interpretation of the data (Flick, 1998). Qualitative methods usually research a question through several methods; it is not unusual to use a combination of documentary analysis, participant observation and interviews. The use of

multiple methods and various data sources in research increases its reliability. This study used the multi-methods approach, which provides effective cross-checking of information. Another way of cross-checking information was interviewing both LAPAC members and PALM planning staff involved with the consultation process; a final cross-check was ensured by interviewing former LAPAC members, retired Town Planners and the planning spokespersons of four political parties. Data triangulation occurred because of using focus interviews, review of documents and direct observation during the meetings.

For *referential adequacy*, to ensure the reliability of the collected data, the researcher has visited the development sites and neighbourhoods, which have high re-development pressure: the area such as the Kingston Foreshore Development in Kingston, development activities along Northbourne Avenue and Barry Drive, and the Haig Park in the inner city area.

#### **4.5.2 Transferability**

Sandelowski (1986) commented that the essence of a qualitative inquiry should be meaningful directions and applicability to other situations. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 316) noted that 'transferability in qualitative inquiry refers to the usefulness of utilizing the study process and its results in the context of another time and place'. This study is confined to the evaluation of the consultation process through planning advisory committees and proposes a theoretical framework to evaluate the fairness and effectiveness of public participation in planning. This evaluative framework can be applied to other public participation processes in general and planning advisory committees in particular. Moreover, the reader can determine the applicability of the findings and their relevance to other contexts.

#### **4.5.3 Dependability**

Dependability is ascertained by examining the methodological and analytical decisions made by the researcher during the study (Hall and Stevens, 1991). This may require determining whether decisions made are 'consistent with their circumstances and assessing whether interpretation and recommendations are generally supported by the data. It follows that a systematic documentation of the rationale, outcome and evaluation

of the actions related to data collection, sampling, analysis and dissemination of the result may used to indicate dependability' (Hall and Stevens, 1991: 19).

Another means of ensuring dependability of methodological and analytical rigour is to obtain expert comments from the 'supervisory committee' of the thesis (Krefting, 1990). The researcher had regular contact with his supervisory committee and received directions on how to structure and use methods to collect the necessary data. Given the nature of this study, the supervisory committee advised following qualitative approach using the focus interview technique with direct participant observation in meetings and document analysis.

#### **4.5.4 Confirmability**

Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study; this is achieved through the researcher's audit trail, which allows the researcher to track the decisions made and steps taken in the study. An audit trail entails keeping a research journal that includes original data (audiotapes, transcripts, and meeting notes), early data interpretation or analysis, and guides for LAPAC members. All details were recorded in a journal and inserted in this thesis where appropriate.

#### **4.6 DATA PRESENTATION AND REPORTING**

When preparing the written report, the researcher considers the style of reporting. Focus interview reports have traditionally been presented in a narrative style (Krueger, 1994), which uses complete sentences and is augmented with quotations from the individual or group interviews. An alternative is the 'bulleted' or outlined report, which uses key words and phrases to highlight the critical points, but this style is normally restricted to short report writing. This study used the narrative style. There are three narrative styles in focus interview reporting (Krueger, 1994): the first consists of the quotations or ideas followed by all participants' comments. The second style is a summary description with illustrative quotations followed by an interpretation. This study followed the third narrative style,

which is replete with statements and followed by the researcher's interpretations of those statements.

One important aspect of using the narrative is finding a balance between direct quotations and the researcher's summary and interpretation of the discussion (Cameron, 2000). Morgan (1997) notes that when too many quotations are included the materials can seem repetitive, or chaotic, while too few quotations can mean that the vitality of the interaction between participants is lost to the readers. Therefore, Morgan (1997) recommends that the researcher should aim to connect the readers and the original participants through 'well-chosen' quotations, which this researcher has done.

#### **4.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Care has been taken to use appropriate methods to evaluate the criteria of fairness and effectiveness in public participation. Understanding people's perceptions and differing opinions on the same issue requires qualitative inquiry; using the semi-structured focus interviewing technique is a relevant way to gather the attitudes of people involved in planning policy and their perceptions on the overall consultation process. The flexibility of focus interviews allows the respondents to elaborately discuss issues of particular criteria that they may consider pertinent. In addition, field notes collected during the meeting, documents such as PALM's publications on community consultation, and meeting minutes have given credibility to the research methods used for this study.

There is much literature about the criteria of effectiveness in public participation (Webler, 1995), most of it related to environmental decision-making (Day, 1997). Very little has been written on evaluating public participation in planning, so, the aim of this research is to develop a conceptual model that can be applied in planning research. The LAPAC case study has provided some important criteria that need to be addressed in evaluating fairness and effectiveness. The focus interviews yielded many comments on these criteria, which were organized using the computer software Nvivo. The presentation of data followed both the narrative and the interpretative style. The results are discussed in the following three chapters.

## **CHAPTER 5: EVALUATING FAIRNESS IN THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate and coherently discuss the criteria of fairness outlined in Chapter Three. Research on fairness demonstrates that people's satisfaction with a decision largely rests on whether or not the consultation process has been carried out through fair procedures (Lind and Tyler, 1988). If people perceive the decision-making procedures as fair, they are more likely to perceive the decisions as fair (Lind and Tyler, 1988). Perceptions of fairness are often closely correlated with people's satisfaction with a consultation procedure and their perceptions of decision outcomes. Thus, it is essential for public participation efforts to be conducted fairly in the eyes of citizens and give adequate consideration to their evaluations of a consultation process (Smith and McDonuch, 2001). Although public participation literature acknowledges the importance of evaluating fairness, researchers have drawn a variety of conclusion about what criteria people use in deciding a procedure is fair (Lauber and Knuth, 1999).

In this study, respondents were asked to evaluate their public participation experiences. Various issues of fairness were analysed in depth to help determine how respondents themselves conceptualize a fair process for planning decisions. The evaluation is derived from data acquired through focus interviews, observation and supporting documents, as previously described. This chapter is organized to evaluate the fairness of the public participation process in planning, with specific reference to the method of the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC). The essential criteria discussed are adequate opportunity, early involvement, representation, and agenda setting and feedback. The analysis of those fairness criteria can further be used to formulate or to modify people's satisfaction with the consultation process.

### **5.2 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING FAIRNESS IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

#### **5.2.1 Evaluating Fairness: Adequate Opportunity**

It was discussed in Chapter Three that an adequate opportunity criterion has many factors, of which four are pertinent for the discussion of fairness in a planning advisory committee: equal capacity to participate meaningfully in the discussion process, equal

access to pertinent planning information, equal power of influence on the planning decisions and equal opportunity to participate in the discussion. However, every criterion has its own sub-criteria, which are systematically discussed in the following section.

### *Equal capacity to participate meaningfully*

To participate in the discussion process meaningfully, participants require adequate access to planning information that is easily understandable by the planning policy community. Webler (1995) defined this as competent understanding by individuals of issues required for the discussion. However, the authority that conducts the consultation should provide relevant and adequate information to the participants, and it is essential that adequate time should be provided for making informed comments on planning and development matters (Dandekar, 1982). Therefore, dissemination of relevant planning information and communication of this information to the participants are necessary for the development and implementation of planning policies (Dickinson, 1999). Access to relevant planning information is also increasingly recognized as essential for informed planning decisions. But what type of information is provided to the planning policy community? This question concerns the relevance of information provided to participants for their comments and suggestions (Kaufman, 1999). In this regard, there were some problems related to 'inadequate relevant information' and 'too much disorganized information' provided to the LAPAC members for their comments on development applications.

The LAPAC reviews and provides input on all formal development applications, Master Plans, Group Centre Redevelopment Plans and other planning and design matters referred by the planning authority. The committee members, with their relative understanding of planning and design matters, provide a great deal of community concerns on proposed development applications: this is their main role in the meetings discussing planning proposals. To fulfil this role, committee members must review a large amount of planning and design information before discussion can proceed. The documents may include all background and preliminary studies, previous applications, maps, information on zoning, sections of the relevant *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*, the existing Territory Plan and the guidelines for achieving High Quality Sustainable Development. It is important for the planning authority to forward all relevant information well in advance of the meeting date to the committee members, allowing them ample time to review



development applications. However, the LAPAC members interviewed were found to be dissatisfied with the time allocation for reviewing planning documents, which they believed was insufficient. Most LAPAC members believe that they are normally given documents too late, sometimes just a day before the meeting. Delay in forwarding the relevant information to the members does not give them enough time to review planning proposals for discussion at the next scheduled meeting, so they are unable to participate meaningfully in the discussion. Similarly, time allocated for written submissions on particular development applications is also insufficient; in some instances such submissions were forwarded to the members only on the evening before the scheduled meeting day. In such cases, LAPAC members cannot examine the details of development applications to make comments that reflect community concerns about the planning decisions.

The LAPAC members also expressed dissatisfaction that they were not always given all the information necessary for making informed comments and had to request additional information from the developers or planning staff. Most of the committee members believe that planning staff control the level of input provided by the committee members and, therefore, the flow of information. The committee often finds it difficult to determine the staff position on proposals, whether or not all information has provided to the committee, as the developers sometimes attend without providing necessary information to the LAPAC members or to the concerned Technical Officers. Members become confused as to whom they should approach for necessary information required for the evaluation of a development application.

However, the LAPAC protocol (PALM, 2000b) indicates that every committee must operate within a time-frame in order to approve a development application. A number of LAPAC members find the preparation for some specific meetings is very time-consuming, especially when they are required to review background materials for the Master Plan and Group Centre Re-development Program; so they find it difficult to prepare themselves adequately on the complex development applications, which they feel require ample time before the committee meeting. But the planning authority allocates the same timeline regardless of whether the development applications are simple or complex. Most of the members find this process prevents them from participating meaningfully in the LAPAC meetings.

On the other hand, the LAPAC protocol also states that the main objective of the committee is not to delay the approval of development applications (DA), but to involve the community for their input at the earliest possible time in order to incorporate their comments into the planning decisions. Generally, there is a time limit to get DA approved after formal submission to the planning authority, so Technical Officers and LAPAC have to respond within a limited timeframe. The researcher has observed that time for reviewing DA is not sufficient to prepare adequately for an informed discussion. Only the business representatives on the LAPAC were found to be satisfied with the time allocated for reviewing development applications. Complaints about insufficient time given to resident and community groups are questioned by the business representatives, who believe that residents and community representative do not understand planning procedures and development approval. Those members dissatisfied with insufficient time allocation for comment categorically expressed concern about business representation on the planning committee: the residents and community representatives were mostly dissatisfied, and opposed to business representation. A resident representative illustrated this issue directly:

Business reps [representatives] who are *de facto* representatives of developers know all the rules and regulations; therefore, they don't require sufficient time to make comments. But we need time to go through detailed plans.

But this does not happen in PALM's consultation process for allocating time to all committee members. PALM normally gives very little time to read and to make comments on the DA just a day before the scheduled meeting, sometimes even during the meetings when member do not have a chance to glimpse the documents. A resident member said:

We have particular concerns that the developer knows the timing for the decision of DA is going to occur between or just before the meetings. DA can be lodged just after one meeting and decisions made before the next meeting. So, there is not enough time to make comments on DA most of the time.

Another member, who had long been involved with a LAPAC, made a similar comment on time allocation:

Generally there is a time problem. DA copy needs to be sent to every member of the committee. But it is not happening. If we are going to make a decision on a development application, every member needs to be able to have the opportunity to look at the plan before the meeting. What they [PALM and developers] are doing now is sending a copy to the convenor, a copy to the representative of that particular suburb, not every one. Only the members who belong to that particular suburb have the opportunity to see it before the meeting. You cannot make any competent judgement without a copy of the DA before the meetings.

*Equal access to the pertinent information*

Access to the various pertinent documents is an important criterion for evaluating the fairness of a consultation process. The advisory committee and others involved in planning decisions should have equal access to the sources for commonly agreed-on standard definitions of the continuing development process (Webler and Tuler, 2000). All participants in the planning process should also have equal access to available and systematic knowledge<sup>1</sup> (Renn et al., 1995).

Residents and community representatives often complained that they were given inadequate information. The white folder provided to the committee members at the beginning of their tenure on LAPAC is messy; most LAPAC members commented that the folder is not organized in such a way that they can find the relevant planning laws and design guidelines, which are basic to comments on a development application. Often they had to ask the Technical Officer or coordinator to provide relevant information. A resident member commented:

New members would not understand what is contained in the white folder. It is not well organized, and has no community profile. Most importantly, it does not

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<sup>1</sup> Equal access to information and equal access to knowledge are not similar. Webler (1995) differentiates these two aspects: access to information denotes the availability of information with facts and figures; access to knowledge indicates the adequate explanation of the data. For example, the level of the Ph value in water does not explain its effects on the environment: the data should explain how the environment is affected. This process is called 'access to knowledge'.

have basic information with an executive summary, so that a new member could understand at least the basis of development approval.

All planning participants should be given planning documents written in accessible language. The quality of planning the information provided to the LAPAC members is important for making informed comments on planning and development matters, but LAPAC members interviewed were dissatisfied with the quality of planning information provided to them. They were asked to evaluate the quality of information given to them in the form of development applications and Master Plans; residents and community representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the contents and the information structure.

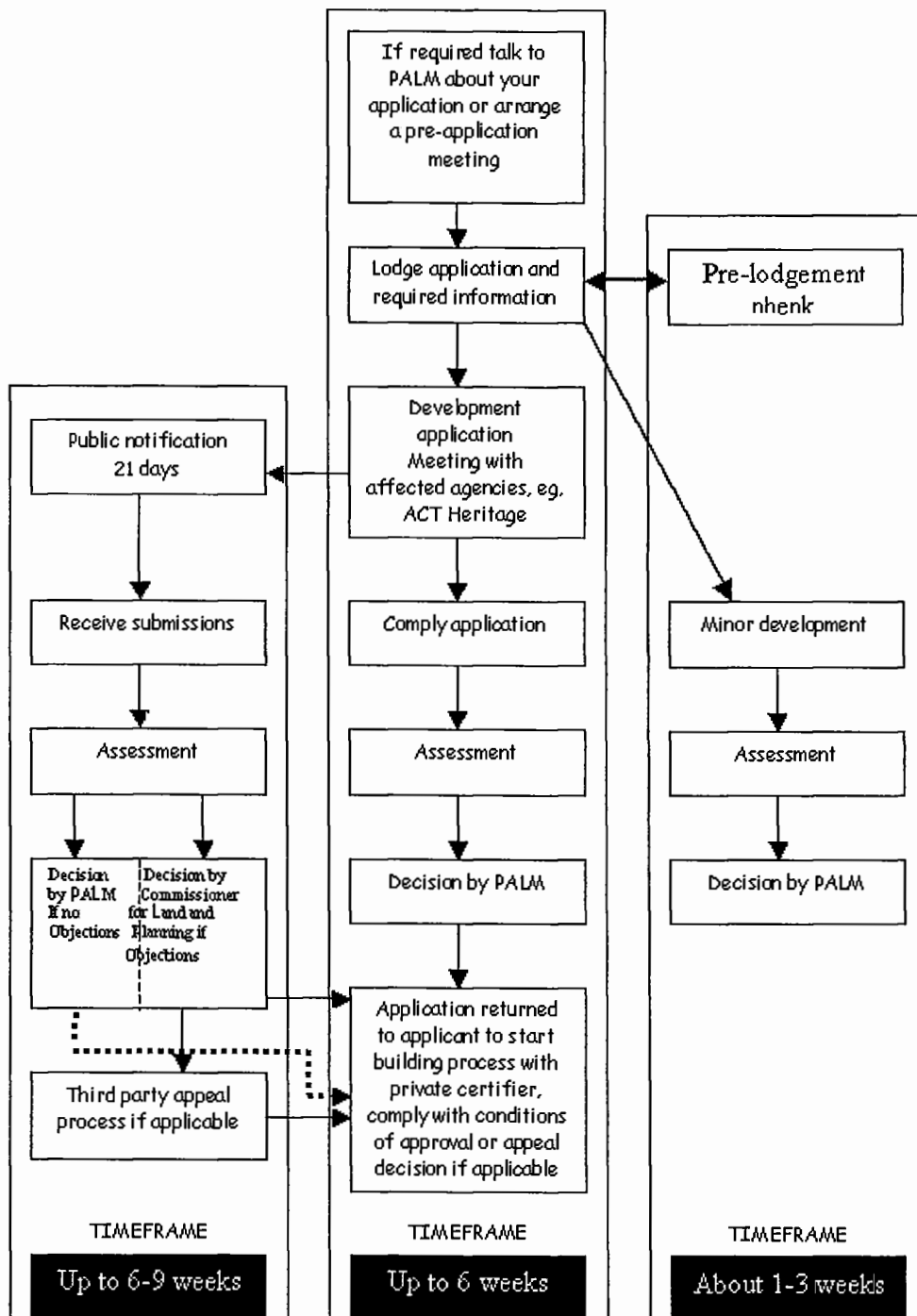
They felt that most of the documents used planning terms and many technical words, which they believed a layperson would not understand clearly; thus a major constraint to understanding the planning information was the language used in documents provided to members with no prior knowledge of planning and design matters. Community groups also complained that documents were not written in community-accessible language, but in planning and design jargon, which committee members believe is difficult to understand; they feel this hinders their meaningful participation in the discussion. A community representative on LAPAC commented:

Well, the architect and planner can understand all the documents, it is not written for us.

Another resident member, by profession an architect, commented that the amount of information was sufficient, but the language used to communicate the information made it inaccessible to some committee members. He added:

There is always complaint about the information that is provided. And, this I would tell you, it is not everybody that understands it. I mean, me as architect planner, I have ... a way of understanding planning and high quality sustainable design concepts, and it is not everybody that understands this. ACTCode 2, criteria of high quality sustainable design...not everybody understands the objectives of this type of language. ... But the basic information is available to everyone. The question is how is it [information and documents] structured?

**Figure 5.1: Development application process**



Sources: PALM (2001a)

The interview data indicate the level of members' perception of the language used in the planning and design documents. This study has not received unconditional support for the statement that planning documents should be in accessible language, rather a clear demarcation has been noted: some documents are comprehensive and need a planning professional to understand them. The new members find difficulties in understanding of development applications and other planning documents, which results in meetings being dominated by old members while the others are marginalized.

### *Equal power of influence*

The interview data indicate that two groups have a strong influence on the decision-making process: senior planners or assessors and development proponents. The LAPAC members interviewed feel that Technical Officers have a greater opportunity than others to influence the DA assessing team within the planning authority. The wider public also believe that the planning authority depends on the views of Technical Officers in making final decisions, except for other planning issues with political interests. Some LAPAC members feel that much of the policy process takes place behind closed doors in discussions between Technical Officers and developers. To some extent, PALM Executive Director and other planning staff interviewed also acknowledged that Technical Officers played an influential role in final decisions. Some members who regularly attend the LAPAC meetings believe that it is not the Technical Officers or assessing group, but the developers, with good professional interactions with the higher authority, who are mainly influential in decision-making. Both parties interact and have influence, at the beginning of their DA process; this type of interaction has been criticized by many LAPAC members, who term it an 'unholy alliance' between planning staff and proponents. This is reflected in a comment made by a West Belconnen LAPAC member:

A developer in the first instance goes to see PALM. He [developer] comes up with the proposal and PALM gives some guidelines and says: *well, this is what you have to do, and comply with until or before you go to see the people*. So, they have developed some strategies where they have to say, *you have to inform the public and let us know*. What is happening is, PALM and the developers come hand-in-hand and give the impression that PALM is in the pocket of the developers. And PALM says *that is what we are doing for the community, this is good for you, you should have it*, as if they knew what we wanted.

He added to justify his comments on PALM Technical Officers:

The way they [technical officers] talk and the take the developer's part during any brainstorming session indicates that they are close allies and have common goals in development. We are just trying to do something for the betterment of the community. It indicates that our advice is not taken into consideration; rather PALM takes advice from the proponents to initiate development work. That is the reality of Canberra's planning situation. PALM is not doing any planning; they are approving the developer's proposal only. Everything is running on an *ad hoc* basis.

Therefore, it is become important to determine which stakeholders within the broader planning policy community actively participate in the decision-making process and who attempts to influence the overall decision-making process from behind (Dickinson, 1999). Some LAPAC members (except business representatives) and the wider public agree that development proponents such as the Master Builders Associations, GH Shaw and Associates, representatives from real estate and other architecture and planning firms are automatically included on LAPACs either as business representatives, or as appointees by the Minister for Planning. These representatives have a great deal of influence on decision-making. Committee members also feel that development proponents are the main policy participants in the decision-making process, because proponents have vested interests in the outcomes of planning decisions, outcomes which could be a multi-unit development in the inner city area or approval of dual occupancy on a big block; this would benefit the proponents who construct houses and units in high-demand areas. Thus, LAPAC members believe that PALM's Technical Officers and high level of planning officers in the decision-making process within the administration regularly consult development proponents before DAs and Master Plans are tabled to the LAPAC or public forum for consideration. Some members commented that developers do not bring any DAs without prior consultation with Technical Officers, and the planning authority does not bring any Master Plans (which are normally designed by the PALM planning staff not by the development proponents) without consulting and obtaining great support from at least some developers. In fact, developers are essential in the planning process because their support is needed for any new policies affecting urban development, since

developers must abide by the Territory Plan, the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*, and to achieve High Quality Sustainable Development. If the planning authority tried to implement planning policy without the support of the developers, this may result in a time-consuming and complex process for PALM. Therefore, resident and community groups expressed concerns that Technical Officers and developers were the most influential groups in planning decisions. However, a business representative interviewed felt that resident and community representatives were not sufficiently competent to effectively influence the Technical Officers in consideration of their concerns about the planning decisions.

Another business representative, also a developer, commented that residents and community groups had difficulty articulating their values using appropriate planning language and terms. They only expressed emotional attachment to their places on redevelopment issues, which they think may affect them directly. In such cases, only vocal members on the committee may take advantage of this situation. A few members normally discuss the complete agenda and topics tabled for discussion, and give no chance to others for equally participating in the discussion. These vocal members were seen as drawing attention away from important planning issues, or as a form of opposition to planning proposals. All the silent members are marginalized in the discussion, even though they are often asked to say a few words at the end of the discussion. This situation has been seen by a former committee member as caused by their lack of ability to strongly and articulately express their concerns over the discussion table. A member of Majura LAPAC commented:

Convenors, planners and developers talk too much on issues and spend most of the time allocated for the discussions. When the time is finished they look at us for our comments as if there were two groups—vocal and silent.

Some members commented on the influence of other organizations on the planning decisions, and identified residents and community associations within the LAPAC regions as lacking the political power to have an important influence on planning decisions, because they have no entitlement to be consulted regularly, even though they are often consulted when the planning authority feels it appropriate. However, community organizations attempt to influence the planning process from outside the legitimate



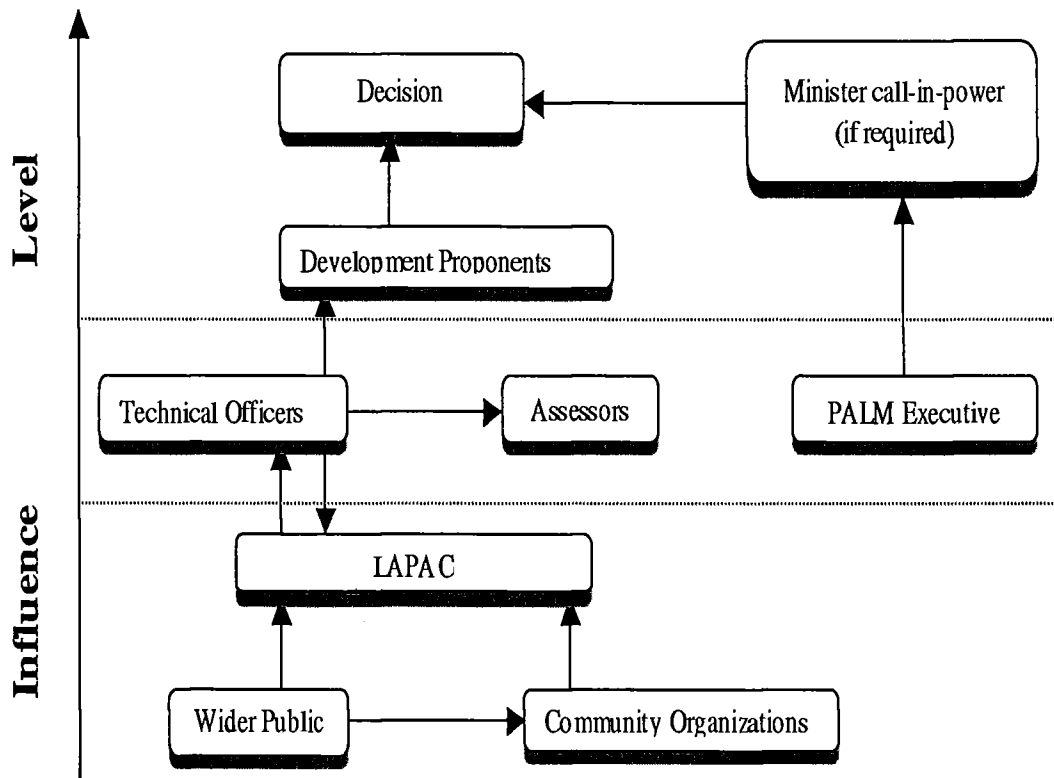
consultation body through attending LAPAC meetings, writing letters to the media, holding media events and inviting the planning authority to present any urban revitalization programs; this is the only way they can influence the decision-making process from outside. This clearly indicates that community groups have less effect on planning decisions than do LAPAC and the developers. The perceptions of LAPAC members on influence in planning decisions and the actors in the planning process are different. Interviews with a LAPAC convenor (also a community leader) indicate that all the planning stakeholders and other development proponents have the some degree of influence on the planning process; however, the community at large feels that developers enjoy the most.

The wider public consist of enthusiastic people who normally belong to various residents' and community associations; they often come to LAPAC meetings and participate in the discussions, as they have been encouraged to do. Even though some groups have formal representation on the LAPACs, other members interested in planning also attend meetings on various occasions; some go regularly. But in a separate way, these groups have no formal power to influence decisions and they believe that PALM has placed them far from the process of decision-making. Most LAPAC members (except business representatives) and members of the resident and community groups feel that they are marginalized in total planning decisions. PALM Technical Officers recognize that these groups can register their concerns on planning and development matters through their representatives on the LAPACs, but they come to the meetings to support their representatives. This process delays the approval of development applications and creates misunderstanding among the policy community.

To evaluate the level of influence by the planning policy community on planning decisions, it is important to identify the role of formal consultation bodies and their places in the decision tree (Figures 5.2-5.4); it is also important to determine the status of groups in the consultation process. In the case of LAPAC, most members do not agree on where the LAPAC stands in the decision-making process, compared to others in the planning policy community. There were many views of LAPAC's place on the decision tree that placed LAPAC in different locations within the broader decision-making process. A LAPAC member felt that LAPAC was naturally included in the planning process, and thus was a part of the decision-making process, and that LAPAC helped to bring

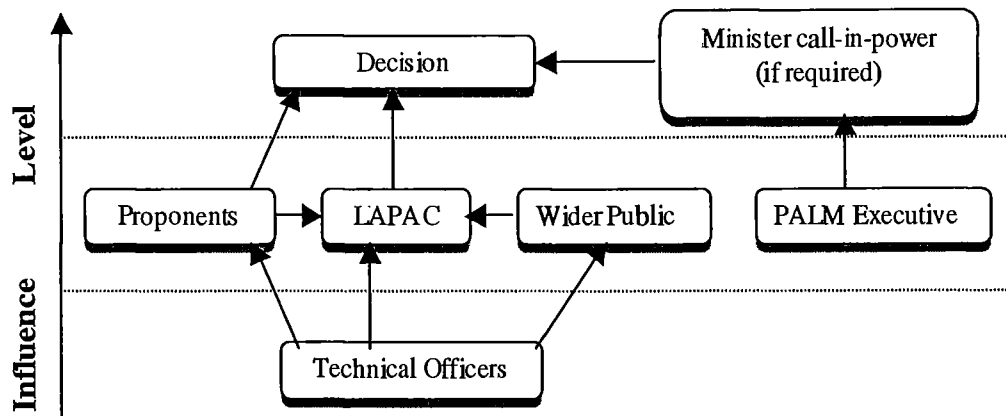
community concerns using this platform into the public sphere. Two other LAPAC members pointed to the role of LAPAC as facilitator or mediator between the community and developers, placing it just a step below the parallel to the Technical Officers and assessors (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Influence on planning decisions (identified by LAPACs)



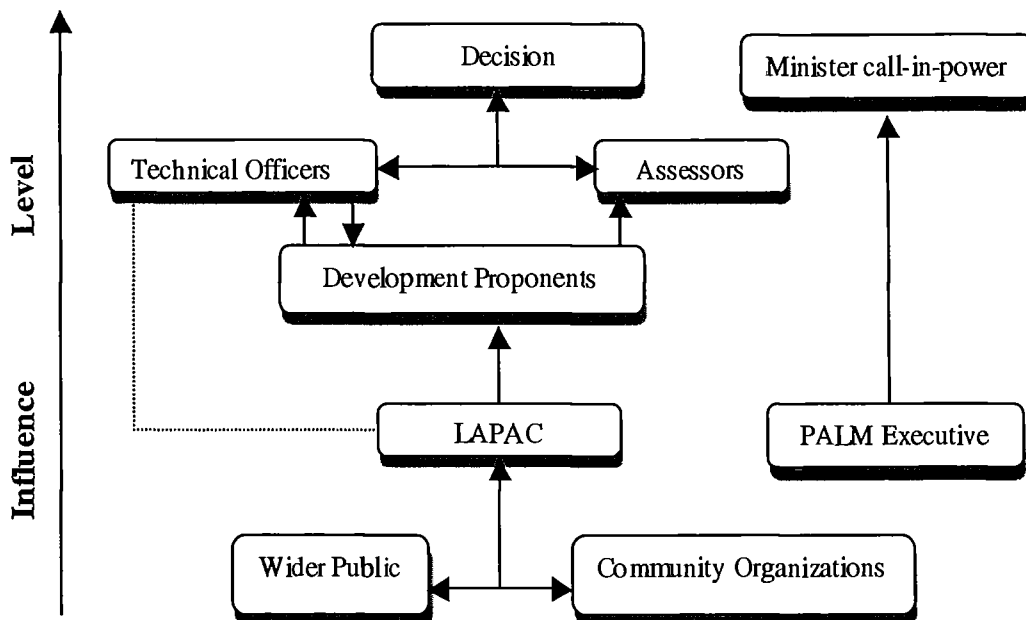
However, some of the Technical Officers interviewed feel that LAPACs were created with the aspiration that various planning and development issues will be discussed before final policies and decisions are made. They also note that LAPAC provides an opportunity to register their concerns on planning and development matters and thus is situated on the boundary between development proponents and the wider public (Figure 5.3). All Technical Officers see LAPAC's main role as to make comments on development applications referred to them by the developers or planning authority, but not to generate any new planning issues for consideration. This view reveals that Technical Officers place LAPAC on the outer periphery of the PALM planning processes.

Figure 5.3: Influence on planning decisions (identified by Technical Officers)



All the remaining members of the LAPACs believe that LAPACs have a very limited influence on the final decision-making process, and locate LAPAC at the bottom level of the decision tree (Figure 5.4). They feel that LAPACs have provided a great opportunity to the residents and community groups and the general public to appear before the meetings to discuss and to raise concerns about planning process, but they have no meaningful influence on the decision-making process.

Figure 5.4: Influence on planning decisions (identified by wider public)



Therefore, it seems that the fairness of LAPAC must be evaluated on two features: first, whether the discussion process is a good platform for public participation, where the community, affected people and the wider public are given adequate opportunity to raise their concerns and feel empowered through the consultation process; and second, LAPAC as a community input mechanism: what level of influence it has as perceived by the community and development proponents.

In providing an opportunity for members and the wider public to join the discussion process at the LAPAC meetings, LAPAC has been very successful as a platform of public participation. In the LAPAC meetings, the wider public can participate in discussion on planning and development matters; however, they do not bring any planning matters for discussion, they only discuss planning applications that have been conceptualized either by PALM or by developers. They acknowledge that this gives them a platform from which to express community concerns, which they might not otherwise have had. Some members of the wider public interviewed believe that LAPAC provides the planning authority and the ACT Government with a level of legitimacy that the authority could not obtain regularly through other consultation mechanisms; in fact some placed LAPAC much closer to the planning authority, as an equal partner in planning decisions than did the members of LAPAC. The wider public perceive that the planning committee is a good opportunity for public participation and that they have some ability to influence final decisions. Other consultation activities such as information nights, public hearings, submissions and public workshops, while less expensive, do not achieve the same level of satisfaction among the wider public.

#### *Opportunity to participate in the discussion process*

Webler (1995) notes that every participant should have an equal opportunity to attend, initiate, and discuss in the consultation process. The interviews with LAPAC members reveal that all members and wider public have an adequate opportunity to express concerns on development proposals. However, some long-time members have been under prolonged stress and anxiety because they felt that the planning authority paid hardly any attention to their comments and preferences. They were given the opportunity to make comments on development applications, but did not know whether the community views were taken into consideration. They have gained the impression that the preferences designed by the architects and planners would be approved with some expected changes,

identified by a LAPAC convenor as ‘minor changes’; and that it is all pre-determined by the developers to give an impression that comments and community concerns are taken into account. He added:

Changes are pre-planned, that will give an impression to the community ... [that] they have been respected.

The interviews with residents also show that what matters to them is not the opportunity to express their views, but rather the importance of being listened to, and having their concerns taken into consideration. There was a feeling in some long-time LAPAC members, particularly resident representatives, that the consultation was just an ‘obligatory’ process to give an impression that community consultations were carried out and decisions were being made with community input. They believe that the initial decision has already been taken without proper recognition of the community concerns.

Another community representative agreed that they are only given opportunity to participate in discussions at LAPAC meetings or other consultations, but they are never invited or included during the conceptualization of a development application; rather planning issues were conceptualized either by the planning staff or by the development proponents, not by the community groups or other consultative bodies. Resident and community groups feel that their concerns are neglected and developer’s views given importance into the planning decisions. Some note that the planning authority and Technical Staff eventually take the community views into account for planning decisions, but developers do not adequately act upon the committee’s concerns and give them any real weight. A LAPAC member commented:

The planning decision-makers have the political stand and are motivated by the development proponents with an interest to serve them not the community and residents.

A developer also commented on that issue and supported multi-unit development in the inner city area, which he believes has a high demand for affordable housing. He added:

We are responding to the market demand for affordable housing units, which will definitely drive the urban economy into a good shape. Young people don't want to go further to the Gungahlin area. They want to live in close proximity to their work places. The Territory Plan also allows us to put dual occupancy in a big block and to put some more affordable units.

### **5.2.2 Evaluating Fairness: Early Involvement**

The LAPAC members interviewed indicated that they would prefer a broader role that would engage them at the beginning of the planning process to register community views and act on behalf of community. But the existing process, they believe, only consults them at the end of the decision-making process, thus preventing them from making meaningful comments on development applications. An interview with a LAPAC member indicates that LAPAC has experienced a great deal of frustration from the virtual impossibility of implementing some of its recommendations, as the committee is involved too late in the consultation process.

However, some LAPAC members do not want to be involved in the early phase of planning, which would require them to attend inter-departmental planning meetings to raise community concerns. They are overwhelmed with many DAs for the scheduled meetings and it is a voluntary task for the betterment of the community. Instead, they want various departments to come along periodically to the LAPAC meetings for a presentation of future perspectives and development work in their areas of concern. A LAPAC convenor commented:

I have got no time to attend various departmental meetings. I am overwhelmed with many development applications.

In contrast, some members want to be involved in the planning process by organizations such as the Chief Minister's Department, ActewAGL, Urban Services and other development proponents. A LAPAC member said that the committee should be involved early in the planning process with various departmental planning meetings to provide community information. In this way, planners would be aware of the perspectives and attitudes of general community and allow more flexibility for necessary changes. A Technical Officer also realized the benefit of committee members as well as others in the

planning policy community being involved at an early stage of the planning process, because not involving committee members earlier may result in the apprehension that their contribution will not influence the DAs. An ideal situation envisages the involvement of planning stakeholders before the development of the DAs in order to assure the committee members that a fair and early consultation process is occurring. A committee member said that this was not the case in the present type of LAPAC consultation; rather the planning authority came along with the proposal and said 'that is what we have decided to do. You should have it'.

A Technical Officer gave his opinion: that the community should be involved at the early stage of planning, and PALM as a planning authority is trying to bring in the community in the first place for the planning decisions. However, he noted that Canberrans were less interested in participating early in the process and discussing planning matters, but the wider community raised an outcry when they found that proposed development applications and other urban revitalization programs would affect them.

Interviews with residents and community representatives indicate that they want to be involved in the early stage of planning initiatives and meetings with various departments. On the other hand, most of the business representatives interviewed said they did not have enough time to attend inter-departmental planning meetings. Instead, they wanted departmental organizations to attend meetings for an informal discussion on possible development applications that would significantly affect LAPAC's neighbourhoods. A Ginninderra LAPAC member commented:

Well, Lawson [a suburb, yet to release] will be released for residential development. We have only heard from people and seen it in the paper, and later developers come along with a plan. It seems they have done so much background work before coming to the community for consultation. They should have come early for a discussion with us.

However, as mentioned above, a Technical Officer commented that only a few LAPAC members not all of them, wanted to be involved early in the consultation process, community at large was not very interested in participating in the government's various consultation processes. The comment of a Technical Officer is pertinent:

Canberrans are lazy. They do not come early in the consultation process. They come when they feel affected. We try to involve them as early as possible, but they do not turn up until something has happened in their backyard.

Most of the resident and community representatives have commented that early involvement of residents would give the planning authority a greater opportunity to incorporate local knowledge into the planning proposals. They feel that inclusion of local concerns into the planning decisions would ease the conflict between the planning authority and the community. A Ginninderra LAPAC member recognized the importance of local knowledge being accommodated in the planning decisions, and added:

The population of our catchments [Macquarie, Aranda, and Cook] is ageing. We know how our local centres and environments work. But the proposed redevelopment of the Jamo [Jamison Group Centre] has been carried out by the planning team who hardly come to the centre. It is difficult for an outsider to figure out our needs such as needs for the ageing population.

Other members also acknowledge that they have the better option for the Jamison Group Centre redevelopment. Nevertheless, the planning team proposed three options, asking them to comment on each one. The community believe that this is not a fair process for consultation, and that they should be consulted before the formulation of the three options for redevelopment. A resident member of Ginninderra LAPAC who was also an architect-planner commented that the planning authority could have organized a charrette design workshop before conceptualizing the group centre redevelopment plan; the community could in effect design their own options for the redevelopment. Instead of approaching the community, the planning authority designed three alternative options in consultation with developers, and now the community are asked to choose one of those options. All options have multiple features to accommodate many units around the group centre, to meet current housing demand in the area, but people in the community are dubious about putting many units around the group centre, which they think is not the fair solution for the need to revive moribund group centres. They believe that the community and residents should have been consulted earlier to produce various options. Some LAPAC



members commented that PALM appeared to give importance only to the development proponents' consideration to meet so-called market demand, and to politics above the local values for the planning decisions.

Similarly, an Inner North LAPAC member interviewed feels that the decision-makers do not consider local concerns early in the consultation process, because they are not considered professional, not articulated from the planner's table, not designed from the architect's drawing board, but considered as emotional expressions about places. The community are not involved because the planners consider this unnecessary, as reflected in a comment made by a Technical Officer:

The residents' view is about the emotional expression of a place. Sometimes it has facts, sometimes it does not. They would be happy to see various options for them to choose if they can find something interesting, which we can consider valuable to take into account.

It is rather important to identify the levels of involvement in the consultation process. Though there was a formal process for approving DAs, most residents and community representatives believed that PALM had already made decisions by the time DAs were presented to LAPAC and other community groups for their comments. In the mandatory procedure for consultation, residents are officially given the opportunity to comment on predetermined and decided development applications. The community are not involved in the early process to determine the nature of the proposed development applications, rather they are given the opportunity to choose among various options which are developed and conceptualized by the planning staff or development proponents, not by the community. A technical officer commented:

LAPAC should be involved in the consultation process when a complete set of Master Plans or DA proposals is being prepared for public comments.

Most of the planners believe that if LAPAC gets involved at the early or preliminary stage of planning it will be difficult for the planning authority to complete all development work within a financial year. The community concern is to be involved with

the planning process at the beginning of the formulation of development applications; this will provide opportunities for necessary amendments before the formal consultation process. However, the current process is identified by the LAPAC members is that they are involved at the end when major decisions have been made. Only minor changes are being endorsed so as to give impression that community concerns are being taken into account.

### **5.2.3 Evaluating Fairness: Representation**

One of the important criteria of fairness in public participation is the nature of the people involved in the process, so it is pertinent to analyse how people are recruited on the committee. What selection criteria are used? Do they represent cross-sections of the population? Do they obtain the wider community's views to put into the decision-making process? Who has a chance to take part? Who raises their voice? Who keeps silent or is excluded from the process? This study has examined these questions to evaluate the fairness of representation in planning advisory committees. One of the most often cited criticisms of the advisory committee is its lack of representativeness, because the advisory committee is perceived to offer the opinions of only a few people selected, elected or appointed by the authority purposefully from the resident and community groups.

#### ***Balance of membership on LAPAC***

LAPAC membership has evolved considerably over the last seven years. Since its introduction, the ACT Government has changed the system of representation on LAPACs. Originally there were two representatives from each suburb, three business representatives from all the suburbs and one representative from the community council; later the ACT Government changed the nature of representation, adding one business representative from each suburb and continuing with Ministerial appointees up to three or four in one LAPAC.

LAPAC members are elected for two years with representation drawn from elected resident representatives, the local residents' group, the community council and the business community. This study found mixed feelings among committee members about the current balance of representation on the committee. Most of the resident representatives feel that current membership of LAPAC is not balanced. Some business

representatives and Ministerial appointees normally do not live in the area, but only become members of LAPAC to serve their business and construction interests. However, the interviews with business representatives show that they are satisfied with the current balance of membership and its selection process. The membership of the LAPAC includes a wide variety of local environmental and planning activists, educators and business people. Vari (1995) found that advisory committees with a broad composition, including professional disciplines, non-government organizations, academics and other, improved the committee's level of impartiality and credibility and fostered a consensus-seeking process. In the case of LAPAC, this is true to some degree, as the interviews indicate that the LAPACs consist of various people involved in planning and development matters and other interested members of the public. However, many of the committee members who belong to residents' and community groups are dissatisfied with the current selection policy and the process and the balance of representation.

Committee members, who expressed dissatisfaction over the membership and selection policy, identified various reasons. They are very critical of the Ministerial appointees and business representation, with whom they do not have amicable relations. A former LAPAC convenor was critical of the vacancy filling system:

The Minister normally nominates people like real estate agents, and builders as residents. If there is a vacancy, he nominates landscape architects in private practice. Also, he nominates people from construction firms who neither live nor have an office in the area.

Another member raised the question of too many architects and planning professionals on the committee, who served only the planning authority and overlooked community concerns. He added:

Developers, people in the architectural industry could in effect dominate the membership of the LAPAC, even though the meeting is open for all and a lot of the community does not know, but developers and architects know it could be stacked in their favour. However, the process is fair. They do advertise the meeting in the paper. But there is an inability for a particular group to stack the meeting.

However, another LAPAC member was very positive about the Ministerial appointees on the committee:

The Minister can appoint people with knowledge of planning and design standards. Appointees are not in a dominant position in LAPAC anyway. He [Minister] can appoint people who probably would not go through the election process. Because they are not known, but want to make a contribution and they are not dominant, so in that respect, it is all right.

Vacancies are another concern for LAPAC to operate its consultation process effectively in a timely manner. There are always large numbers of vacancies in the LAPACs: some have a continuing problem of quorums to conduct regular meetings, due to the regular absence of business representatives and the Ministerial appointees from monthly scheduled meetings. It was noticed that the Majura LAPAC meeting was cancelled a number of times owing to the absence of committee members, mostly the business and the Ministerial appointees. In this regard, a Majura LAPAC member commented:

Business people attend the meeting if the agenda has interest for them. Otherwise they send an apology to the convenor. ... If the committee is operating in a vacuum, then there is little scope for improvement of outputs and committee process.

Therefore, LAPAC lacked consistent contributions from all sections of the community and lost potential publicity about its existence within the neighbourhood and greater community.

### *Selection criteria*

There are no formal selection criteria for the LAPAC members to be included on the committee except for verifying the ACT driver's licences of the interested people entering the meeting room on election night in order to ensure the participants' resident status of a suburb covered by a LAPAC. This process is fair and democratic, since every one has an equal chance to nominate anyone to be a member of LAPAC. However, there is no clear statement of selection criteria except for residence in a neighbourhood and business

interests in those neighbourhoods covered by a LAPAC. This researcher attended every LAPAC election from 1999 to 2001 and observed that PALM did not have any selection criteria to target credible and knowledgeable individuals with knowledge of planning and design to be members of community-based planning advisory committees. On the other hand, there is an advisory committee in the ACT Government the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), which is based on a set of selection criteria (Environment ACT, 1999). The EAC is an advisory committee comprising people with experience in the environment field, who can give informed comments to Environment ACT for consideration. This is not the case in planning advisory committees.

Interviews with the planners indicate the importance of members from all parts of the community in LAPACs, and the importance of accommodating diverse views on planning matters. Planners also recognize that LAPAC members have been giving free consultations to the planning authority on a monthly basis, since LAPAC members are not given any honorarium for their involvement. They have spent time and effort in reviewing and providing advice on development applications and have fulfilled their roles very well. Accordingly, the planners are satisfied with the level of detail in LAPAC work. However, they believe that it is not the responsibility of the community to nominate people with expertise to planning advisory committees, as this would increase the complexity of the planning authority accommodation of all comments and concerns.

The interview results show that the *election process* is fair and democratic. Every member of the community has the right to participate in the election to be a member of LAPAC and nominate anyone to be on the committee. The Minister has the discretionary call-in-power to appoint anyone that the Minister feels appropriate for the LAPACs. The provision of appointees has created doubt and anger among the elected members, particularly the resident and community groups. Some of them raised the question of their importance in the community consultation process:

The election process is quite democratic. However, the appointment process is not good enough. I don't understand why Mr. Roberts [name changed] becomes a member of this LAPAC. He neither lives nor has any businesses in our LAPAC areas. He has a business outside our area and how he became a member of our LAPAC, he said, he was appointed by the Minister. I should have told him you are

disqualified. But I know him; for this reason, I cannot speak to him like this. Even if you have a house or a shop [in LAPAC area] and don't live here [within a LAPAC boundary], you could be a member of LAPAC.

Another member of the same LAPAC expressed similar views:

The process [of selection] is democratic; when it comes to loading the committee with business people and Ministerial appointees, it is not correct. People living in Red Hill that have a shop in Dickson, are eligible to be a member of LAPAC. I feel it is not correct. We want business people, not a shop-owner who neither lives in this area nor has familiarity with the neighbourhood.

On the other hand, another member acknowledged that the current election process is fair in terms of the number of people attending the election, but raised the question of the low profile of the election process in the community; she suggested that the current process requires structural changes to ensure the presence of more members of the community at the election. She added:

The election procedure needs to be very democratic, for instance, there were two votes only for a candidate, and the supporter was the wife of the candidate. I believe this is not a democratic process. There should have a system to ensure greater presence of residents, community groups, school representatives, church leaders and business people during the election process, which is totally absent in the current LAPAC process.

Sometimes a business representative does not truly represent the area of concern where the business has no relevance, such as in the Parliamentary Triangle and Barton, where there are many government offices; however, there is a business representative for Barton. The residents and community representatives believe that this type of membership normally serves only the interest of developers and other development proponents, not the residents and the community at large, so most of the resident representatives do not want them on the LAPACs. They believe that business representation is necessary for a balanced membership of the committee, but they commented that there should be some kind of check imposed on membership eligibility.

Some members expressed the view that LAPACs should only be a platform for resident and community representatives, not developers or business people appointed by the Ministers. In this regard, a member commented:

If there is a proposal to build a house in front of Federal Parliament, they [developers] will go there to build a house.

The researcher asked dissatisfied respondents to identify the underlying causes of their dissatisfactions over the balance of the committee structure. To explore their perceptions on membership and recruitment, all dissatisfied respondents were asked to explain their reasons. Most said that LAPAC had excessive Ministerial appointees and lacked representatives from all sections of the community and residents. They were concerned about too many business representatives being on the LAPAC: for example, although West Belconnen LAPAC has no appreciable business establishments, it includes business representatives. They are also concerned about the non-representation of important stakeholders on the planning advisory committee. A LAPAC member pointed out the absence of NCA representation on the LAPAC, in spite of the fact that the NCA is considered to be important in the planning decisions in ACT.

### *Nature of representation*

LAPAC protocol provides for the inclusion of representatives from community councils, resident associations and business groups. In addition, the Minister for Planning has the discretionary call-in-power to appoint whoever he or she believes to be appropriate for the committee (PALM, 2000a). Accordingly, every LAPAC has representatives from community councils, resident associations, community action groups and business groups. PALM invites community councils to nominate their own members to represent the council on the LAPACs. Normally, only one representative from each community council is officially eligible to represent the council, but sometimes more than one representative from the council attends the meetings. In Manuka LAPAC, it was observed that more than one member attended the meeting regularly, but other members were not concerned about it. Manuka LAPAC is the only LAPAC that allows multiple representation and its convenor explained this saying, 'we are very much flexible'; however, the community council has only one vote. This flexibility has given the whole community a great opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

The observation and interviews suggest that community councils provide stronger and more detailed explanations of current proposals than do other representatives at the meeting. The community groups bring with them details of proposals that will positively or negatively affect their neighbourhoods; this is because community groups have regular meetings and access to information; among their members are experts from diverse fields including architecture and planning. They are capable of generating a shared vision in planning for their neighbourhoods in partnership with the planning authority.

In the Manuka LAPAC, there is a clear distinction between community groups and other representatives. The Old Narrabundah Community Action Group appears to have more credibility with professional architects and planners and greater opportunities for input in the planning process than others in the Manuka LAPAC. The Old Narrabundah Community Action Group regularly researches planning and development activities, which may adversely affect residents. It often provides various alternatives planning proposals if they seem relevant.

Similarly, in the Inner North LAPAC, the community groups and other interested community organizations have very well defined views on planning matters. This LAPAC covers most of the important places in Civic and its adjacent neighbourhoods, and community representatives on it are actively involved in making comments on Inner City revitalization programs. Members of the community council regularly attend LAPACs meetings with other organizations that have interests in planning and development. Planning for ACT Together (PACTT) is one such planning organization, differing from community councils whose main task is to deal with planning and development matters only. PACTT regularly organizes workshops and meetings on current planning issues, inviting a wide range of organizations that include political parties, developers' associations and academics in order to deliberate on planning and development. Views from cross-sections of the community are summarized and sent to the planning authority for consideration.

#### **5.2.4 Evaluating Fairness: Agenda and Minutes**

Webler (1995) identified agenda setting as a criterion to evaluate the fairness of the consultation process. In order to evaluate the process of agenda setting, it is important to



evaluate its operational procedures for conducting meetings and discussion. More importantly, discussions are based on the available agendas; members contribute throughout the discussion and make comments on individual items of the agenda. Vari (1995) notes that the agenda for the advisory committee activities is usually defined by the 'problem owners'. Many important issues may not be included in the discussion process: the 'problem owners' may select the agenda strategically, so as to support their own interests.

In general, the LAPAC coordinator in consultation with its convenor sets the meeting agenda. No scheduled meeting has ever been cancelled because of the lack of a meeting agenda, but sometimes meetings were cancelled owing to insufficient attendance for a quorum. This is because some business representatives do not attend the meeting regularly, as the meeting agenda may not interest them.

The coordinator includes on the agenda all recurring issues; any issues referred to LAPAC through communications from PALM staff; requests and correspondence from any outside group or individual; and any item added by the LAPAC convenor or other members. All members of the LAPAC interviewed feel that they can add items to the agenda at any time and feel comfortable with the agenda setting procedure. But some of the members are concerned about its appropriateness. They feel that the convenor, not the coordinator, should have the final say in adding any item to the agenda for discussion in the meetings. Initially, the LAPAC used to prepare the agenda for the discussion; later PALM took over this responsibility. An experienced member of a committee expressed doubt about giving sole responsibility to a convenor for final agenda setting. He added:

The previous convenor of this LAPAC was rigid to include any item during the meeting, even though there were issues of current importance to discuss. Although he was a residential representative, I got the feeling that he was actually a lobbyist for the developers. He had an office in the developer's office. Surprisingly, he was using that office's stationery and even email facilities. So, sometimes they acted on the developer's behalf.

On the other hand, a Burley Griffin LAPAC member believes that the convenor has a very small role in agenda setting. It is the LAPAC coordinator who along with

developers, normally lodges development applications and sets the agenda for discussion in the meeting. Because the planning authority and development proponents have planning issues to be discussed, the community has nothing to put on the agenda:

The community has no role in putting the items on the agenda. LAPAC is reactionary to put MP and DA. We are simply reacting on the MP and DA. For this reason, we are reactionary.

### *Time allocation for agenda setting*

Some members are concerned about the time allocated to the committee members for the agenda. Sometimes, the agenda reached the members on the Thursday or Friday before the scheduled meeting on Monday. Sometimes, it did not arrive until Monday morning and that would be the first time the members of LAPAC knew something was on the agenda. On a number of occasions, the planning authority delivered the agenda in the afternoon and most of the committee members could not manage the time to look at all those development applications. For these reasons, some members who are normally very regular in attending the meetings feel frustration about the time of agenda setting and its delivery, which they believe is intentionally designed not to give advanced notice to the members, in order to avoid informed suggestions that will probably conflict with pre-conceived ideas, or to avoid people's concerns. A member raised this issue directly to the Minister for Planning and Urban Services in a public meeting, and asked him whether it would be possible to make the agenda available, perhaps a week in advance. In reply to her question, the Minister said, 'That's a good suggestion, and we will take a look at it' (PACTT, 2001).

### *Agenda format and process*

Before the meetings start, there is an opportunity for every member to announce whether they have anything to put onto the agenda. The first item on every LAPAC agenda (Appendix C) is 'welcome and apologies'. The LAPAC coordinator records the presence and absence of current members at the meeting and introduces any delegations and parties that will present and clarify development applications and Master Plans. A wide variety of groups and individuals appear before the LAPAC occasionally, including citizens or groups with specific planning and environmental concerns. The LAPAC coordinator is always accompanied by a Technical Officer, who normally discusses and explains the

PALM position on existing DAs or Master Plan, and also explains technical issues where necessary.

The second item on the agenda is 'Declaration of Conflicts of Interest', followed by the approval of the minutes from the last meeting of the LAPAC. The third item is 'LAPAC Correspondence': the committee considers any correspondence it has received before moving on to consideration of new and old business. The LAPAC regularly receives correspondence from organizations and agencies in the LAPAC areas, including planning and environment related organisations: Save the Ridge, Save our Suburbs, Hackett Interim Group, Griffith and Narrabundah Community Action Group, The Belconnen Community Council, Resident Associations and Planning for ACT Together (PAC TT). This correspondence keeps the LAPAC members informed about planning and environmental issues and activities in the LAPAC regions. The fact that LAPAC receives and reviews correspondence from a broad variety of local groups and businesses indicates that LAPAC is very well informed about planning issues in Canberra and monitors the progress of many urban policies and programs.

The fourth item is 'progress report on outstanding DAs'. Sometimes committee members ask the developers to provide necessary information regarding the proposed development applications; the developers normally attend with the requested information, in some cases the opinions of the people possibly affected by the proposed development applications. This item is followed by the presentation of a new development application by the concerned developer.

After all the business items on the agenda have been discussed and acted upon, the floor is open for consideration of any other matters tabled by the coordinator or members of the LAPAC. At the end of the meeting, the convenor reminds all LAPAC members of the date of the next meeting.

***Agenda setting: too much work***

All six convenors along with two previous convenors interviewed were happy to be a part of LAPAC, and felt that they contributed significantly to the planning decisions on urban revitalization programs. Convenors also believe that through the LAPAC consultation process, community input is generally taken for the planning process and considered as

community views. They acknowledge that they have a social responsibility to act on what best suits the whole community. However, they feel overwhelmed by looking at many development applications, correcting previous meeting minutes, communicating with other members, and preparing their own concerns about all agenda items that are to be discussed in the following meeting. Some members feel that it is too much unpaid work. Also, the area of concern for a LAPAC was so wide that sometimes members spent much of their personal time in looking at all development applications. A planning spokesperson of a political party commented:

It's fair to say that LAPACs already have too much work that they can handle and I note that this is more a function of the Government's refusal to properly resource LAPACs to undertake their terms of reference, that it is of the capacity of people on the LAPAC to do that job well.

***Agenda setting: hidden agenda***

Some resident members interviewed feel that business representatives have hidden agendas to be approved by the planning authority. This is evident in the following comment made by a Burley Griffin LAPAC member:

The community sometimes became disillusioned when their comments were not taken into consideration due to some hidden agenda. They [developers] were not transparent. All appointees have got their own hidden agendas to support developers and proponents or PALM planning initiatives. They [PALM staff] are not transparent either.

Dual occupancy development involves the placing of two dwellings on one big block. Currently, there are many applications for dual occupancy development in most of the suburbs close to the inner city area, but LAPACs are not officially allowed to make comments on dual occupancies or to some extent on heritage issues, which are very important to discuss in the meetings. However, LAPACs are not entitled to make comments and advise on dual occupancy, transportation planning, land lease, land sale and release and heritage issues, which PALM believes should not be referred to the LAPAC for consultation. An Inner North LAPAC member made a comment that reflects total dissatisfaction over the exclusion of planning matters:

Dual occupancy is in our view, the single biggest development issue in the Inner North. Yet the LAPAC is deliberately excluded from considering dual occupancy proposals and, therefore, from informing the Minister/PALM of its and the wider community's views. This severe limitation of the LAPAC's role as a community consultative body is all the more significant in the light of PALM's apparent policy of judging each application on its own merits, with no consideration of the cumulative impact of the ever increasing number of dual occupancies.

Another LAPAC member commented:

We are consulted on various issues such as fence height, extension of garages, and extension to put additional rooms on existing house, however, the funny thing is that we cannot make comment on dual occupancy—that is dreadful. It seems dual occupancy is not a planning issue.

Dual occupancies were certainly an issue when the LAPACs were established in 1995. But the government specifically excluded dual occupancy, as there was a concern that it would have generated too much work for the LAPACs and support staff within PALM. In practice, individual members of LAPACs could provide comments to the planning authority on particular dual occupancy proposals, but the committee as a separate entity could not. LAPAC protocol specifically mentioned that members are not entitled to make comments on dual occupancy. But LAPAC members feel that dual occupancy developments have a considerable impact on the amenity and character of local neighbourhoods. For these reasons, a planning spokesperson of a political party raised this issue in the ACT Legislative Assembly:

Mr. Speaker, ... [party] thinks it's time that LAPACs, as representatives of communities affected by redevelopment activity, should have the opportunity to comment on dual occupancy development and to start giving PALM and the Minister some feedback on exactly what their concerns are about the nature of dual occupancy (ACT Legislative Assembly, 2000).

Despite many requests to include dual occupancy in the LAPAC agenda, the industry groups do not want to refer it to the LAPACs. A member of the wider public, working in an architectural firm, sent the following letter to the Minister for Planning which was read out in the ACT Legislative Assembly to justify the non-referral of dual occupancies to the LAPAC meetings:

I recently attended my first LAPAC meeting. I was appalled by the negative, anti-development attitude of most of the committee members. I refused to believe their views are representative of the broader community. As a member of the Manuka community, I must applaud your position on the non-referral of dual occupancy proposals to LAPAC (ACT Legislative Assembly, 2000).

When this letter was read out most of the Members of the Legislative Assembly made comments on LAPAC and its involvement in planning decisions. However, a convenor of a LAPAC expressed anger and dismay over the issue and commented:

The Minister read out a letter, which went against the LAPAC process and the attitude of LAPAC members, but the Minister never read out any letters that we sent him stating our concerns on planning decisions.

This convenor also believes that the Minister is against her LAPAC, which was clearly demonstrated in the ACT Legislative Assembly. She also comments that enjoying a planning portfolio in the ACT Government does not reflect commitment towards the community inputs and concerns. A recently resigned convener has made a similar comment concerning the Minister's action in the ACT Legislative Assembly:

I have sent him [Minister for Planning] letters concerning imbalanced selection criteria of the member and other important issues, which have never been referred to the Assembly. Only negative propaganda has been given high priority and importance by the Planning Minister on the planning situation in ACT.

### ***Minutes taking***

Writing up conversation involves a lot of work and mistakes are inevitable. Minute taking is a very important aspect in the consultation process: it is treated as community input for

the planning authority and for the Minister for Planning in order to incorporate community views in the planning decisions, and often the planning authority depends on minutes to identify community concerns and to understand community preferences on a development application. Furthermore, minutes can be treated as the total advice on the issue to be considered by the planning authority as true community reflections. The concern is that there is only one coordinator for all six LAPACs, who normally records all the minutes.

After recording the minutes, the coordinator normally sends these to the respective convenors for confirmation. Some members value the minute taking, as they believe it has importance in the decision-making process. A LAPAC member made the following comment:

I have a major difficulty with the quality of minute-taking at LAPAC. I believe that often the importance of certain decisions/agreements made by the LAPAC groups is not accurately carried over to the minutes. A lack of focus by the group at times could be blamed for this. Sometimes, it would be difficult for the minute-taker to recognize that a decision has been made.

The main concern about the minute taking is accuracy in recording facts and opinions given by the members. Minutes are also valuable to the assessors when examining the merits and demerits of development applications and to incorporating community concerns. Therefore, the accuracy of the meeting minutes is an important issue in the consultation process. Since LAPAC is a group of diverse people, they certainly express diverse views on a particular topic. It is difficult for a coordinator to record accurately all comments made by the participants in the meetings; sometimes, the coordinator gets confused on whether the committee has reached a decision, and thus the coordinator often makes mistakes in recording comments. The coordinator commented:

I always get confused about whether or not there was a decision. I therefore record all comments onto the minutes.

A member reported that sometimes the coordinator wrongly records comments on certain issues. Most of the time the minutes need editing at the beginning of the following

meeting in order to record actual comments. In this situation, members who are absent from the next meeting have no chance to make the necessary corrections or to check whether their views are adequately recorded. The conveners, who are supposed to look at the minutes before going to the planning authority, are believed to be overwhelmed with development applications and the necessary preparations for the next meeting. There is no checkpoint to recording the minutes whether they have been recorded accurately and neatly. Committee members often need to correct reports of their own views in the last meeting on issue-specific discussions.

### ***Role of the moderator***

The Moderator and the facilitator in any public consultation process play an important role. Both serve in the consultation process as neutral entities responsible for enforcing the rules fairly as indicated in the consultation protocol. There is, however, a difference between moderators and facilitators. A facilitator merely tries to discuss the specific agenda without guiding it, while a moderator demonstrates more leadership. A facilitator may encourage silent participants to discuss issues; a moderator may make proposals, participate in the debate by presenting relevant information on the current agenda, and present arguments on many elements, which are missing from the discussion (Webler, 1995). The attitude and behaviour of moderator or facilitator should be subject to the scrutiny and approval of the participants in the consultation. Webler's (1995) model of fairness outlines three ways to evaluate the role of moderator and rule enforcement. Everyone must have an equal chance: to suggest a moderator and method for facilitation; to challenge and support suggestions by others for a moderator and a facilitation method; and to influence the final moderator and facilitation method selection.

In the case of LAPAC, it is neither a moderator nor a facilitator but a convenor who conducts the meetings. The convenor is also one of the parties affected by the development applications, but the moderator or facilitator may not be a member of the affected parties. The LAPAC convenor is involved in the committee in the capacity of a resident, community group member or business representative. With regards to Webler's (1995) fairness analysis model, it is not possible to fit all the categories into the LAPAC process. It is implied that the LAPAC process is fair enough to suggest a convenor for a LAPAC; however, there is a question of the method for facilitation. In such situations, the LAPAC process should be evaluated with the role that the convenor normally plays in



conducting meetings, and organizing all information relating to the meeting and the discussion process.

### *Conducting meetings and LAPAC operations*

The convenor chairs the meeting; in the absence of a convenor, this is normally done by an experienced member. The convenor is elected and reconfirmed by the committee at the beginning of a new term, with a maximum two-year term for each convenor. The convenor has many roles in administering meetings: the main role is to facilitate meetings according to the established agenda and to maintain the LAPAC protocol. In general, the LAPAC meetings are run according to an agenda, although occasional items may be postponed to a later date if developers do not appear at the scheduled meetings to present and display plans on proposed development applications. In this case, chair of the meeting writes a letter or makes a resolution censuring the developer for not appearing. The researcher noticed this situation on a number of occasions in Manuka, Inner North and Ginninderra LAPACs.

Many LAPAC members interviewed, including the convenor and former convenors of six LAPACs, commented that it took some time for an advisory committee convenor to learn the regular operations of meeting, and communicating with planning staff and development proponents. Most of the respondents feel that having a convenor in place for a longer period of time is important in order to develop and maintain effective working relationships with the planning authority and development proponents, as well as to provide continuity in the operation of LAPAC. However, some committee members commented that the convenor could be the only one for all LAPACs, but meetings could be chaired on the basis of rotation. Others feel that rotation systems would jeopardize the direction and consistency of the meetings and the total process.

The interview data indicate that a clear majority of the committee members agreed that convenors manage the LAPAC meetings in a competent and professional way, but a few expressed dissatisfaction with the style of conducting meetings and other activities performed by the convenor. Only the Inner North, Manuka and Burley Griffin LAPACs were somewhat critical of the convenor; all other LAPACs were satisfied with the current convenors and their overall performance. The researcher asked those who were dissatisfied for their reasons: most felt that convenors were not playing an important role

and not maintaining coordination with the planning agency staff to convey community concerns over the DA that would affect them so the original proposal could be reconsidered. Some were critical of the convenors and had the feeling that convenors were on the side of the development proponents and were not making efforts to protect their neighbourhoods from bad developments.

Apart from the question asked about the overall competence of convenors, committee members were also asked to comment on to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the performance of convenors at various stages of meetings and its administration. These included statements about neat and succinct clarification of the agenda, giving ample time to members, flexibility to allow extra items on the agenda and adequate understanding to explain DAs and Master Plans with facts and figures. Commenting on these objections, most of the LAPAC members acknowledge that meetings tend to be quite smoothly administered by the convenors except for a few exceptions in Manuka and Inner North LAPACs. What was revealed from observation of these two LAPACs is a conflict of interest between business representatives and resident and community representatives. On the other hand, other LAPAC members interviewed agreed that the members of the committee work well together and are respectful of each other's comments; they said that most decisions are made by consensus and if there were no consensus opinions on any DAs, this could be recorded in the meeting minutes for the planning agency to consider as 'difference of opinion' on various development applications.

#### **5.2.5 Evaluating Fairness: Feedback and Responsiveness**

The LAPAC appears to be a good platform for public concerns and inputs, but PALM is not equally responsive in considering and acting upon that public input. The end result is an advisory committee that generates the appearance of effective public participation. The perception of the wider community about the LAPAC process is that it is a positive addition to public participation; however, it lacks adequate responsiveness to the committee's concerns. Whilst the committee functions well as a good method of public participation, it has only limited ability to act as a policy input mechanism providing advice to the planning authority and the Minister for Planning on many planning issues. The LAPAC is a way for the wider community to provide input to the planning authority, but its effectiveness is severely curtailed by the lack of fairness and openness in the whole planning process, since in principle the planning authority accepts the committee advice,

but the majority of committee members believe that PALM fails to accord this advice any real weight. The LAPAC is established to deal with information provided by the Technical Officers and development proponents to PALM or the assessing committee, not to filter public opinions. While PALM policy-makers may solicit public input from interested groups and individuals, they do not have any standard way of processing or responding to that input.

Feedback to committee members is an important factor to evaluate the fairness of the public participation process, but in the LAPAC consultation process there is no structural form of feedback whether the advice is considered, modified or rejected. Even though the LAPAC protocol indicates that PALM is to 'consider LAPAC comments on DAs and provide feedback' (PALM, 2000b: 3), it appears that PALM seldom provides feedback or follow-up concerning consideration of LAPAC's contribution, or what decisions have been made. This lack of responsiveness between PALM and LAPAC leads to assumptions that LAPAC views are not considered.

The interview data indicate that some members are critical of the process, as there was no formal way to provide feedback to the community and to the consultation committees. Members felt that they did not get proper answers to their recommendations and also believed that listening to what people have said and then ignoring it could not be a good consultation process. This situation was described by a LAPAC convenor:

There is no feedback at all from PALM, the Commissioner or the Minister. The attitude about the value of LAPAC input is not feedback. LAPAC members have no idea whether any of their comments and submissions have affected any outcome. They have no idea why their comments and concerns are rejected. To simply say that LAPAC views have been taken into account is all but meaningless.

It is worth mentioning the words of former NCDC Commissioner Tony Powell at a public rally:

The community has no effective mechanism for having its views made known and being accorded due consideration by the Minister, as well as by the public

service's Planning and Land Management agencies. While the Government and the Legislative Assembly pay lip service to public consultation, few changes are made as a result of LAPAC recommendations either. It is fundamentally a policy of deceitfulness that inevitably leads to frustration and disillusionment on the part of citizens and community groups who are accordingly becoming vocal.

Similarly, LAPACs do not monitor the outcomes of their recommendations; only enthusiastic individual members normally do some informal monitoring of development work. This individual questioning is not sufficiently regular to keep members up-to date on the current status of their recommendations.

The interviews with LAPAC members indicate that they are concerned about whether their comments and advice are taken into consideration. Monitoring is an integral part of any consultation process, and keeps all the concerned parties up to date on whether their views are being considered by the implementing authority. A systematic form of monitoring in the consultation process is essential, particularly where regular consultation is required (Rahnema, 1992). There is much criticism of PALM that it has not been informing LAPAC members regularly about their comments and concerns; this leads LAPAC to the question of the viability of its protocol claiming their comments are taken into consideration. Providing feedback to the planning community is a statutory planning procedure that involves notification by letter to all concerned parties who comment on a development application or a Master Plan. However, interview data indicate that only a few receive response to their submissions and even then they have to ask PALM to respond. Even if PALM provides feedback to the LAPAC members after repeated requests, this does not have enough information and contains no indication that LAPAC comments and concerns were valued and considered. In addition, feedback does not adequately explain why LAPAC concerns could not be incorporated into the planning process. Following are four extracts from LAPAC minutes, which demonstrate committee concerns at not receiving feedback.

LAPAC expressed concern that on a number of occasions where feedback was provided to the developer, comments were disregarded and concerns were not addressed. Examples were provided including development on Lhotsky St. The LAPAC recommended access should be from Cartwright St to alleviate the high

traffic generation from what is already a very busy road; however, this concern was not addressed (PALM, 2003c).

Improvement is required on feedback returned to LAPAC on comments made on development applications and we desire to see comments made by LAPAC to be heavily considered by PALM (PALM, 2003d).

LAPAC asked for feedback in relation to what extent were LAPAC comments taken for the decision making process. PALM advised that whilst LAPACs have no right of appeal in terms of objections lodged against development applications, 'Notices of Decision' now address individual comments raised by members (PALM, 2003e).

... the discussions and material produced by the LAPAC do not receive adequate feedback and response from relevant governmental authorities (PALM, 2003e).

When asked by members for information during the LAPAC meeting, the Technical Officers only orally reply to the members' queries without giving any firm decision. Even if they provide information, often it is not the specific information, which was sought by the LAPAC members. This situation is reflected in LAPAC minutes:

LAPAC members requested a list of DAs printed on the day of the LAPAC with a progress report included. Ray [a Technical Officer] advised the program is not set up to include a progress report with the list and can only continue to inform the LAPAC of progress verbally (PALM, 2003e)

All the LAPAC members interviewed were asked to respond to a question about what they do if their recommendations and advice are modified or rejected. They normally protest against PALM's decisions in many community forums and write letters to the Executive Director or in some cases to the Minister for Planning. Some members accept the decisions because they lack the power to counter the decisions made by PALM. In general, a majority of the LAPAC members expressed dissatisfaction over the monitoring systems and the feedback.

### 5.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of fairness in this chapter mainly focuses on the context and processes of public participation in planning advisory committees. The interview data reveals differences in opinions and ideas among the planning stakeholders in the light of the specific criteria of fairness outlined in Chapter Three. In the context of LAPAC, the members and other involved in planning decisions expressed different opinions and ideas about fairness of public participation process. The planning policy community involved with the LAPAC process had various perspectives on the consultation process. The results in this chapter suggest that committee concerns are not adequately taken into consideration, but this is not a universal opinion; business and Ministerial appointees have different views of specific issues of fairness process. Similarly, Technical Officers feel that they try to incorporate community input into the planning decisions, but recognize other factors such as the high demand for housing in Canberra and the issues of urban consolidation. Overall, the community feel that they are less influential than the other planning stakeholders in the planning decision-making.

The community representatives identified various drawbacks concerning the fairness criteria: the unbalanced representation and the call-in-powers of the Minister are the main issues. They also blamed the allocation of time is insufficient for the members to review development applications, and poor feedback policy, which makes them feel alienated from the consultation process. Regarding the quality of the information, residents and community members commented that little effort was made in writing planning documents. LAPAC members have the impression that planning documents such as Master Plans, Local Centre Redevelopment Plans and proposed Neighbourhood Plans were written simply to present planning steps as required by the planning authority, but not with the intention of adjusting the information and writing style to the needs of the public. Because of this, members lacked the opportunity to participate meaningfully, which subsequently prevented them from learning more about planning, so they lost confidence in the consultation process. Thus, members suggest that adequate attention and priority should be given to using community language in planning and design documents. Extensive use of planning terms alienates them from making effective comments on planning issues.

The evaluation of the fairness criteria in the LAPAC consultation process is summarized in Table 5.1. This study evaluated the fairness criteria on a three-point scale (SM, SS, and NS) indicating 'satisfy most criteria', 'satisfy some criteria' and 'not satisfy the criteria' respectively. This scale is also applied to the evaluation of effectiveness in public participation process. This has been discussed in Chapter Six.

**Table 5.1: Summary of fairness evaluation in the consultation process**

Criteria	Evaluation	Brief description
Adequate Opportunity	SS	Members have opportunity to participate in the discussion, but lack access to knowledge and information. Members also believe that they have little influence on the decision.
Early Involvement	NS	LAPACs are involved at the end, not at the initial stage of planning proposals. PALM organizes consultation meetings with other non-statutory groups and at the end PALM comes to the LAPAC.
Representation	NS	Only selected and known people are involved; there is no uniform representation from all parts of the community such as church groups, the young, the disabled, knowledgeable persons and others such as NCA representatives.
Agenda and Minutes	SM	LAPAC members are allowed to put items in the agenda; however, some planning issues are excluded such as dual occupancies, transportation, land sale and land release.
Feedback and Responsiveness	NS	There is no feedback system in the LAPAC process. Committee does not know whether comments have been taken into consideration and do not receive any explanation why their recommendations were rejected or modified.

## **CHAPTER 6: EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter evaluates the criteria of effectiveness in the public participation process through a planning advisory committee by using interviews, observation, and document analysis. All criteria discussed in this chapter were adapted from the available literature (Webler 1992, 1995; Landre and Knuth, 1993b; Beierle 1998; Oceau 1999; Renn et al., 1995; Lauber and Knuth, 1999; Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Webler and Tuler, 2000; Webler et al., 2001) and from the observation of the LAPAC consultation process. This was established through attending LAPAC meetings over a period of three years, interviewing its current and ongoing members and analysing meeting agenda and minutes. The main criteria assessed are: the role of the committee members, the decision-making process, conducting meetings, communication with the planning policy community, available opportunity for formal and informal learning about the process, relationships with proponents, and formulating advice to the concerned planning authority.

The aim of the criteria evaluation is to determine the factors of effectiveness in public participation in planning decisions. Such evaluation may offer several indications that can be adopted to guide future formulation of the participation process and may recommend guidelines for evaluating existing practices. The result of the evaluation may also provide feedback information to the planning agency to reveal the participants' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the current processes. The perceptions of participants can also be used to formulate a new or modified process, while the weaknesses may show the way to make improvements in the participation process.

### **6.2 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

#### **6.2.1 Evaluating Effectiveness: Defined Role**

The LAPAC protocol states that the main role of LAPAC members is to comment on broad planning directions for their communities. This can be done through development of Community Value Statements, and by commenting on development applications, as well as other planning initiatives that may affect the planning and design character of their neighbourhoods. More explicitly, the role of the members is to advise on planning



and development matters, and to raise community concerns on the planning issues that will help the planning authority to make informed decisions on urban revitalization programs (PALM, 2000b).

*Current role: LAPAC members perspective*

All the members interviewed felt that the primary role of the LAPAC is to act in an advisory capacity in planning decision-making. The main task of the committee is to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister for Planning on development applications and other planning proposals referred for consideration. The committee holds no executive power to make decisions at the meetings and also has no power to reject any development applications for further development; instead LAPAC acts in an advisory capacity and makes recommendations on development applications. However, some members feel that they have a very distinct role in planning decisions as part of the community. In order to explore different views on the role of LAPAC, this study asked all committee members to evaluate their role in the planning decisions; it was found that members were not in full agreement about their role in the process. However, most of them believe that the role of LAPAC is advisory. A few members think that LAPAC should be a watchdog in planning decisions. Some long-time members believe the committee is actually a fact-finding body to give community input to the planning authority, so it can make informed decisions on planning and development matters. It is widely believed that some members are appointed by the Minister for Planning because of their expertise in fields related to planning and design matters, and can provide a professional opinion on development applications; thus LAPAC acts like a fact-finding body for the planning agency. However, a few members believe the role of the LAPAC is adversarial and confrontational. These are mostly the business representatives who have shown great frustration about LAPAC activities and outcomes, and believe that LAPAC's attitude in planning decisions is negative toward better planning outcomes.

One business representative expressed similar frustration with the fact that the position of LAPAC is fairly low in the procedural process: He commented:

If it is an advisory group then the nature of the advisory body is to give advice after deliberation, i.e. to provide advice. However, it seldom happens. PALM says 'we take on board your comments'. But our comments are for the Minister not for

the PALM, and how come PALM filters the comments come up from LAPACs? What usually happens, some one [LAPAC coordinator] from PALM takes the minutes. This minute goes to PALM and stopped at the planners' desks. How can the minutes be considered as advice?

Though the majority of LAPAC members believe that the committee's role is advisory, the above comment indicates that their role is not advising the Minister but advising the planning agency. They are not able to advise the Minister directly, as all comments and advice usually stops at a level where it should not stop. A LAPAC member stated:

We could play a more proactive role in planning decisions provided our comments reached the right places, at the right times.

Some members feel frustrated about the outcomes of the LAPAC process and their role in the broader planning decisions. They are involved at a later stage of planning decisions and have no way to alter policy that already exists. The following comment of a LAPAC member explains how he thought about the role of LAPAC in planning decisions.

You have created an advisory body to give advice on planning issues; however, sometimes, you [PALM] come and say 'this is what we have decided' i.e. the decision has already been made, then what is the fun of creating and taking advice from the advisory committees?

However, there is unanimous agreement among interviewed members that LAPAC is not, and should not be, a decision-making body. It should remain as an advisory body, unless it is an elected body. They are just an advisory body, not a decision-making body with which some people confuse it. A long-time member noted:

Comments being taken into account or not taken into account in the planning process is a different case. But LAPACs have to look at the process to consult people and to get their input into the planning decisions. Consultation is part of the process. It is like a small window, with a bigger window behind.

However, some business representatives have been overtly critical of the current role of LAPAC: one felt that the role of LAPAC in planning decisions was totally adversarial. He raised the question of members' understanding of planning procedures and noted that advisors in any planning committee should be those people who had the capacity to advise; LAPAC was not a body with such planning expertise but a committee of people comprising residents, community activists, business people and planning professionals. Therefore, some felt that the role of LAPAC was always adversarial and conflicting, and believed the prevailing motive was always to delay the consultation process, particularly DA approvals. Some resident members do not want to see any changes to their suburbs; however, some business representatives feel that there is a market demand for affordable housing in the suburbs near Civic. With the issues of development and redevelopment in the Civic area, there is always a confrontation between business representatives, residents and community groups. Residents and community groups interviewed posed the same views about their role in participation process. Since there was conflict between residents and business groups on redevelopment work, there was hardly any consensus between them: they realized that their role was always adversarial in the LAPAC meetings.

#### *Technical Officers views on LAPAC role*

This study interviewed some Technical Officers who usually attend LAPAC meetings to represent the planning authority. All of them feel that LAPAC is a diverse voluntary group of people to make comments on planning and development matters, but there is a difference of opinion about the role of the committee in planning decisions. Technical Officers are believed to have an adequate understanding of the terms of reference and the role of the LAPAC in planning decisions. When they were interviewed, they expressed very different opinions on LAPAC's role and the overall consultation process carried out by them. Technical Officers have their own views on why LAPAC exists, how LAPAC provide advice on planning matters, what level of planning services they are currently providing to PALM staff as well as to the Minister for Planning, and what role they may possibly play in the future.

Some senior Technical Officers have more or less similar views. They also recognize that LAPAC is a body providing free consulting services for the planning authority on various planning issues, but some often disagree with recommendations and advice. However, recognizing its importance in planning decisions and also acknowledging its role as a

group for expressing needs, expectations, and preoccupations, some senior members found themselves dissatisfied with particular LAPACs and their members on planning issues. They noted that committee members sometimes asked for more information, which planners believed to be an intentional move to delay the whole process. Two LAPACs, Manuka and Inner North, seemed to be more problematical as committee members of these LAPACs demanded unnecessary clarification and planning documents, which might not be required for current DAs under review. A senior planner saw this situation as frustrating and a waste of time:

Some of the members know planning laws and know when to object to any application to delay it. It is done intentionally that developers would miss the market and move away from it [current DA].

Another senior member of a planning team also makes a similar comment:

Overall, it is good to have a forward body to consult on local issues with people living in these areas. Sometimes, their comments are not possible to accommodate in the planning process.

A business representative, who is also a professional planner, identified the causes behind not complying with the recommendations of LAPAC in the planning process:

Sometimes, members come along with a planning philosophy that can fit only with 1930 and 1940 ideas of building codes and with verandas and terracotta, which is ridiculous to fit in the present day of high quality architecture. It is because the members have no prior knowledge of planning and design aspects, which I think, require for making intelligent comments on design and planning process in the urban setting.

Other Technical Officers made similar comments on the role of other LAPAC members. They stated that LAPAC had been going beyond its major purposes as outlined in its protocol, and had moved into the areas that normally are within the discretionary powers of the Minister for Planning. A planning advisory committee should be a body of people

that conveys community concerns into the planning process, not a means of identifying planning matters, which is the main concern of planning agency, not a group or the community as a whole. Residents and community groups are on a committee to advocate pertinent and overlooked issues that may have real implications for planning and development, but LAPAC members are not in a position to dictate the planning process, which should be designed and implemented by the planning authority. Any problem encountered in defining the consultation process, can be solved by using effective techniques. Another planning staff member supported this statement:

Their [LAPAC] role is to view only community concerns that can come up with some naive comments, then we [planners] can say 'yes, your comments have got some basis in real situations' and then we can tap those, as part of their advice.

He gave an example to justify his comments and clearly identified what role an advisory committee could play in the planning process.

Well, Adelaide Avenue [a avenue that links National Parliament to the south side of Canberra City] is degrading, and certainly some of the other members say-- 'yes, it is'. Now, we can ask why and how it is degrading. Then we can get their views and identify the issues, which needs to be addressed by the planning authority. As planners, it is our concern to tap information from the community to put through the planning process. I therefore believe that their [LAPAC] role is to raise community concerns not to dictate the planning process. We have to remember that their views are coming from their heart and expressed emotionally, which is sometimes difficult to accommodate in the planning process.

Technical Officers were also concerned about cases where a committee member writes directly to the Minister for Planning or Executive Director of PALM stating facts in opposition to the continuing planning process. Even though everyone has the right to make submissions to the Minister stating concerns on development applications, the Technical Officers feel that this practice should not be encouraged because it would not show any supportive activities by the members on any development application. Most of the planners believe that LAPAC raises only negative concerns about development

activities but never praises their economic benefits and greater development for the community.

It was observed in the interview that some planning staff did not see the LAPAC as citizen experts on planning issues; they therefore believed that LAPAC would not have much to contribute to the planning process. In general, planning personnel feel that LAPAC is a group of community activists who seek more unnecessary documents and irrelevant information from the proponents and the planning agency. A Technical Officer commented that LAPAC members might not understand the planning documents or would not go through the necessary details provided by the planning authority.

#### *Developers views on LAPAC's role*

Two developers, also members of two different LAPACs, were interviewed; they were represented as the business people on LAPACs, because there is no provision for developers to be members of LAPAC. However, sometimes, they become Ministerial appointees to represent the business groups. Surprisingly, when this researcher approached one of them for a formal interview, after identifying him as developer, his response was negative: 'I am against it'. The researcher asked: 'against what? I did not ask you anything', then, he replied, 'I am against LAPAC'. The researcher reminded him: 'You are a member of LAPAC' and then he said 'I am against residential and community reps [representatives], as they want to stop development in their own suburbs'. The researcher replied that he himself was not part of them, but simply evaluating the current consultation process and perceptions of all members about the process. Finally, the developer agreed to be interviewed.

He started very aggressively with a comment that total consultation process was useless:

Sometimes they [residents and community representatives on the LAPAC] ask for a tree survey for the proposed development. It is not the job of LAPAC, but they are entitled to ask the question. Developers say 'no'. As a developer [but representing business groups on LAPAC], we don't have to give a tree survey to the LAPAC.

The above indicates that business representatives normally belong to developers' community and always try to promote the interests of development proponents. In addition, they are critical of the LAPAC process even though they are member of LAPACs. Business representatives seem to believe that LAPAC belongs to the residents and community groups, who see business people and Ministerial appointees as just opponents of the residents and community groups and feel alienated from the LAPAC consultation process; there is no feeling of equal partners in the planning process. This conflicting and antagonistic feeling also exists among the developers, who believe that asking for additional information delays the process of DA approval, and the delays will cause the developers to lose business tenders and subsequently their income as well. A developer observed that LAPAC was overstepping its boundary by seeking legal power to be a part of the planning decisions. However, it has been noticed that there is a strong feeling that the committees should have a legal basis to be a part of the Administrative Appeal Tribunal (AAT). Developers do not agree with giving legal status to LAPAC, which they believed would put another aspect of planning into the planning decisions; they also believe that the advisory committee is essential for communicating with the community, but should remain in an advisory position to raise community concerns only, not to dictate the planning process, which should remain within the planning agency. A developer said:

If this [legal power] is the case such as the LAPAC is given a legal base, you must have qualified people on the committee. It seems you are putting another arm of planning to the consultation process. On the other hand, if they [LAPAC] become part of a legal base, they can be sued by the developers. We had a case, where a neighbour lodged a complaint to the Court in regards to topple a dual occupancy adjacent to his house. But he lost and incurred money to us.

Business representatives are found to be frustrated with their LAPAC colleagues, for seeking the legal power to be a part of AAT. A business representative commented that there was no such example of an advisory form of the consultation process where the committee was given legal privileges. Only affected and concerned individuals, not a group like LAPAC should be entitled to lodge applications with the lawful authority. On the other hand, a community representative of Manuka LAPAC believes that if a community group such as *Old Narrabundah Community Action Group* can lodge an

appeal with AAT, then there should not be any problem with LAPAC lodging an appeal to same lawful authority. He added:

If we have a consensus decision and authority topples our concerns, then we can go to the AAT like an affected individual and group.

However, when asked if they lost who would incur the cost, a committee member commented that there should be a provision to deal this situation as well.

### *Wider public views on the role of LAPAC*

The wider public were also interviewed across the LAPACs. They feel that they have a good understanding of LAPAC's role in planning decisions, and see LAPAC as a source of information that is required by the planning agency to register community input into planning decisions. In general, the wider public feel LAPAC is a good platform for public opinion and information and can make recommendations to the planning authority on behalf of the community. The interviews with the wider public indicated that members of resident associations and community groups were very pleased to see LAPAC becoming more active in getting public comments and residents' views for planning decisions that would be acceptable to the greater community.

Members of the wider public mostly attend meetings on issues that may have implications for their neighbourhoods. They seldom make comments on development applications, which is a regular practice in LAPAC meetings; instead, they turn to the meetings on issues such as: group centre redevelopment, multi-unit development and the Master Plan for the area, which may affect their neighbourhoods. They often write letters to the LAPAC convenor stating their concerns on proposed development applications. Sometimes they just appear before the meeting as a way to express their concerns. Two wider public of Inner North LAPAC areas interviewed, were found to be dissatisfied with the existing response of LAPAC to the appeal of the wider public on development issues, particularly proposals for multi-unit development. One such proposal for Boldrewood Street in Turner was lodged with PALM, and residents were very much opposed to multi-unit development in their neighbourhood close to the Australian National University and CSIRO. A member of Turner Residents Association (TRA) came to LAPAC meeting with a proposal for alternative options that reflect the majority of the residents' views.



During the LAPAC meeting, he presented a plan that qualified as a residents' option for the development work. Since his first appearance, he had been twice to LAPAC meetings, but had never heard anything from PALM about residents' options. The following quote illustrates his views on the LAPAC process to respond to communities:

I am profoundly dissatisfied with the current process of responding [by PALM] to the community. I have been here twice and have not heard anything about our concerns. I don't know when the community will hear that 'Well, we considered your views and are not able to incorporate them into the planning process. Thank you very much for your efforts to come up with an alternative scenario'.

However, LAPAC as community-based organization cannot do anything on behalf of wider community to respond with their own options; LAPACs seem not playing an important role in making the planning authority accountable to the community as a whole. Similar examples can be found in various LAPACs. For instance, the extension of RSL Headquarters to the park area of Campbell suburb, the development proposal for Ginninderra Lake Foreshore, and the extension of Yarralumla Child Care Centre, are controversial development applications, regarding which residents and community groups come to the meetings with their own concerns and explain the possible impact on their neighbourhoods. In these proposals, the wider public were not satisfied with the LAPAC role nor with the consultation process and the decision outcomes. They were critical of the committee and commented that LAPAC was not effective in promoting community concerns to the planning agency; that it did not truly reflect community concerns and often was not upholding community aspirations and needs. Some wider public commented that LAPAC failed to convey community needs effectively to the planning authority, and so they questioned the role of the LAPAC members in planning decisions. However, dissatisfaction among the wider public is not a regular phenomenon, as some are found to be satisfied with the process. A wider public in Majura LAPAC was pleased that he received an immediate response from a developer to an appeal about sun-blocking in the proposed dual occupancy development in his backyard. The initial proposal for the dual occupancy would have blocked the afternoon sun from his living room; when he objected to this during a LAPAC meeting, the developer lowered the height of the proposed design.

The researcher interviewed a member of the public who regularly attended Manuka LAPAC meetings. He was working as an architect with a construction firm and was interested in the consultation process; he thought LAPAC was not a good platform for the community to become involved in planning decisions, since it would provide only the illusion of input. To make the LAPAC an effective platform for public participation, he suggested that it should have a high profile in the community and should be encouraged by all the planning policy community to solicit real input, but LAPAC has no provision for this.

A member of the wider public in the Burley Griffin LAPAC felt that the LAPAC's role should be to influence the decision-making process according to the community's preferences, but LAPACs seem ineffective in influencing planning decisions. Many reasons have been identified such as structural imbalances, limited time to comment, not enough resources to get public input, and lack of adequate information for the members, as well as for the wider public. In addition, there is too much bureaucracy and a 'rubber-stamp' approach to the DA approvals. If the Territory Plan permits developers to do something about landuse changes, they do not care at all about community objections: they will do it and remind the community about the Territory Plan and the DA guidelines. This is an instrumental approach to planning and for development, even though the community may have reasons to object. A member of the wider public remarked:

If the DA follows development guidelines and complies with the Territory Plan, like it or not, it's gonna be approved. No matter, it is ugly or beautiful if it's followed DA's guidelines, it's gonna be approved.

The wider public believe that LAPAC has a very limited role in influencing planning decisions, but the committee is very useful in finding facts and community concerns, which the planning authority may have overlooked. In such cases, LAPAC can play a fact-finding role in the decision-making process.

It was observed that most of the wider public of both LAPACs strongly felt PALM was not active in protecting Canberra from *Kingstonization*<sup>1</sup>, and as a result, members of the wider public were very frustrated with the process. They also observed the limited role of the PALM in planning outcomes and felt that the proponents might play a stronger role in planning decisions, as well as the political parties which have their own planning policies and political interests.

The wider public in the Inner North LAPAC are involved in many residents and community groups in the North Canberra areas: the Braddon Residents Association, Turner Residents Association, Reid Residents Association, Save the Ridge Association, Community Council, and the newly formed Watson Community Association. All members of these organizations expressed more-or-less similar views on the consultation process and described the existing decision-making process as exclusionary and inaccessible to the general public. They believe that the locus of decision rests with the Technical Officers and members of the Design Review Panel (DRP), which is a kind of parallel body to give professional advice to the decision-makers. They also believe that planning policy is made by a number of Technical Officers and by the vested interest group of insiders and outsiders belonging to the developer community, these groups meet behind closed doors to develop policy recommendations for submission to the planning authority. In this process, LAPAC is marginalized and used as a vehicle to give legitimacy to the consultation process that people are being heard and given high priority. A member of the wider public stated his attitude to the whole planning process:

Senior Technical Officers meet privately with developers and business people to hear their concerns and ensure that new policies are in their favour. They [Technical Officers] are not planners; they are pro-development staff. Planners are those who are able to balance between community and proponents. But they are on the other side.

This respondent pointed out that planners were never on the side of residents and community groups when discussing a development application. It looked as if

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<sup>1</sup> Kingstonization is derived from the suburb of Kingston, which has had high-pressure of multi-unit development in recent times. Members use the term 'Kingstonization' for more multi-unit development in any suburb.

development applications belonged to both the developers and the Technical Officers. This member of the wider public believes that more housing, more units, more dual and triple occupancy and occupying the parks become the main planning objectives of PALM. The current planning directions promote the loss of uniqueness and the Bush Capital image if development continues, so Canberra needs to stop development work without proper planning guidelines, in order to protect its garden city image from the 'scatter-gun' planning approach. He further added that Canberra needed a development control plan (DCP), which was also reflected in Taylor's comments. Taylor (2001a) defined the 'scatter-gun approach' as development, occurring haphazardly where the opportunity occurs (Taylor, 2001b). Taylor also identified various drawbacks of the planning process in the Canberra and termed the current approach as one, where developers felt the need to redevelop and the planning authority responded only to their proposals (Taylor, 2001a).

Though the West Belconnen LAPAC covers twelve suburbs, it has not faced much development or redevelopment pressure. These suburbs are located in far north of Canberra, along the NSW border, and depend mostly on Group and Local Centres. The planning challenge for this LAPAC is the about redevelopment of 'declining' Group and Local Centres and to formulate a policy which provides opportunities to develop each Centre to its potential whilst maintaining appropriate standards of development and environmental quality and a balance of sustainable Centres. There is a need to change existing land uses of Local Centres and to find alternative ways for their viability; accordingly it requires variations to the Territory Plan to allow changes in existing land uses. PALM proposes a mixed-use redevelopment proposal for all Local Centres, but the residents and community groups of these areas are not satisfied with the decision to go ahead with mixed-use development of the existing Local Centres. The wider public are profoundly frustrated about the consultation process; one member of the wider public in the West Belconnen area commented:

Developers in the first instance go to see PALM. He [developer] comes up with a proposal and PALM gives some guidelines and says, 'Well this is what you have to do, and comply with until or before you go to see the people'. So, they have developed some strategies where they have to say 'You have to inform the public and let them know'. What is happening is, instead of leaving it to developers,

PALM and the developers come hand-in-hand and give the impression that PALM is in the pocket of the developers. And PALM says 'That is what we are doing for the community, this is good for you, should have it' as if they knew what we wanted.

Overall, the public expect LAPAC to act as a watchdog to ensure that development applications are not moved quietly through the bureaucratic and political process without being rigorously reviewed by interested residents and the community. Since the wider public have no vote in the LAPAC meetings, they feel that LAPACs must scrutinize the activities of the residents' and community associations to take advantage of the input mechanisms available. Although the wider public often feel they are being ignored and not being heard by PALM's planners, they acknowledge LAPAC as a way for the community to provide necessary input into planning decisions. They also state that LAPAC's influence on planning decisions is hampered by the lack of fairness and openness in the consultation process.

Some of the wider public have very positive hopes for LAPAC's roles and their outcomes. When LAPAC was established in September 1995, they had hoped that the committee would take an essential part in upholding the community's aspirations and expectations. Some felt that their views on planning and development matters would probably be channelled through LAPAC and would be taken into account in the decision-making process. When the committee became operational and advised the planning authority on development applications, the community started to feel that the committee had not systematically and effectively conveyed their expectations to PALM. They identified various drawbacks of LAPAC and would like to see its role increased to cover a wide range of planning issues. The wider public also felt that the LAPAC protocol prevents the advising committee from contributing effectively to planning decisions by excluding various planning issues.

The LAPAC protocol states that the main role of LAPAC is to advise the Minister for Planning on planning and development matters; this is a very specific and limited role, which requires LAPAC to focus on specific development applications. However, interview indicated that there was no consensus among all LAPAC members on their roles and the working mandate of LAPAC. The protocol has been evolving over the time

into policy-making, because the LAPAC members have added to their meeting agendas issues of concern such as dual occupancy, which LAPAC protocol had excluded with an explanation that the committee was overwhelmed with many development applications, so it might be difficult to complete its main task of advising the Minister. Therefore, dual and triple occupancy matters were not included on LAPAC agendas, nor were other planning issues such as transportation planning, ACT Access Planning for disabilities, areas under commonwealth control, land release, land reclamation and land sales.

Some members feel that if LAPAC wishes to become more active in the overall planning process and decisions, it risks losing its focus and may not be able to address the main planning issues. It may also find it difficult to manage with the limited time and resources available; this is why last Liberal Government in the ACT advocated excluding dual occupancy matters from LAPAC agendas. Some members want to expand their role, not only advising on DAs but also collecting community input. They want to include all planning matters on their meeting agendas and to see the current protocol amended to include all planning-related issues in the terms of reference.

Other members, particularly business representatives, believe to expand their role would take more time than they have allocated already, and more time is not available. If the committees were given more to do then it would be difficult to complete meetings in time: they would probably last more than four hours. Some members express enthusiasm about increasing the number of meetings to at least two a month, considering the large number of development applications, but business representatives disagree with increasing the frequency of meetings and feel tired of the LAPAC process. A business member commented:

As a businessman, I cannot expend more than two hours in a month. However, currently, I spend more than that to oversee the current DAs for the meeting.

### **6.2.2 Evaluating Effectiveness: Promote Learning**

Kweit and Kweit (1981) pointed out that public participation in the government decision-making process improves education and knowledge for citizens and bureaucrats involved directly or indirectly in participation. Weblar et al., (1995: 443) commented that public

participation, which includes deliberation and inclusion, 'can initiate social learning processes which translate uncoordinated individual actions into collective actions that support and reflect collective needs and understanding'. Arnstein (1969) observed that an effective participation process would enhance the participants' understanding of the planning process and decision outcomes. In addition, regular outreach activities and orientation programs for the participants on planning issues would also help participants understand planning and development matters (Kweit and Kweit 1981). Understanding planning matters allows participants to carry out the role envisaged in major planning laws involving identifying violation or compliance by the development proponents or development applicants by applying community pressure and by enforcing laws on any development and redevelopment proposal. For instance, a greater understanding by the LAPAC members of the Territory Plan and *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* is essential for discussions with the development proponents on many planning and design aspects, such as maximum height limits of a building in commercial or residential areas, plot ratio, allowable dual occupancy on big block, available open space, allowable land for other commercial developments, unit titling, and front and rear setback. Webler (1995) commented that a good understanding of the issues on agendas and approval process of the project is an effective criterion to evaluate a public participation process. Understanding various planning and design laws would give ordinary committee members a great deal of planning knowledge to deliberate issues and formulate alternative options. Lauber and Knuth (2000) pointed out that if citizens participate in the decision-making process, and if one of the goals of decision-making is to produce high-quality decisions, some efforts to educate or inform citizens should be inevitable. Therefore, educating the participants has become an important criterion to evaluate an effective participation process.

This study has discussed two aspects of this criterion: the first mainly discusses participants' perceived understanding of planning matters involved in the LAPAC process; the second, whether the participants actively feel that they had sufficient knowledge of planning to contribute effectively to planning decisions.

In this case study, LAPAC has not been successful in increasing participants' understanding and awareness of planning issues. After serving over a period of years or

so, attending scheduled meetings, and going through huge amounts of planning documents, LAPAC members commented that lack of educational and outreach programs made them unable to contribute effectively to planning decisions, to preserve the uniqueness of Canberra and its image of Bush Capital. They identified various reasons for their ineffective contribution to the planning decisions, mainly their unfamiliarity with the processes that are normally carried out through advisory committees, and with the committees' main function to advise on planning and development matters. As a result of their unfamiliarity with the PALM planning process, LAPACs sometimes spend a great deal of time in learning about planning rules and design guidelines in order to become familiar with relevant planning process, most particularly with the process of development approval.

New members were also not given prior understanding of the planning process, and the essential steps of development approval, which was necessary for them to make comment on development applications. In spite of this, they tried to make themselves familiar with the planning process, but unorganized planning documents and excessive use of planning and design terms prevented them from understanding the planning process in timely manner. Interviews with other members indicated that they had no adequate understanding of development applications, except for a few who had long been involved with the process.

Most importantly, it was observed that only a few members had a working knowledge of the Territory Plan and the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991*; most of the time, other experienced members had to explain necessary clauses and features. The continued variations to the Territory Plan are not also clearly understood by the committee members, only a few of whom are conscious of changing situations. Without proper and prior understanding of planning rules and acts, it would be impossible to contribute effectively to the proposed development programs. Some resident members interviewed feel that the planning advisory committee does not need to be comprised with experts in the planning field; but they acknowledge that some working knowledge of the planning process and relevant laws would definitely promote the understanding of planning and its consultation process. However, a former member, by profession an architect, evaluated the LAPAC process as 'totally waste of time' for him, and commented that all members should have professional and construction knowledge in order to make informed



comments on planning matters. He had found in the LAPAC that this was totally absent in most of the members, so he decided to step down from the committee.

Some resident members were critical of members who were motivated by particular political ideologies and tried to dominate the discussion. Some local political leaders, who became members of the LAPAC, used it as a platform for their own political parties. A convenor indicated that politically motivated members had no knowledge of planning and construction matters, but they tried to make comments as if their option was the only correct and accurate opinion to be accepted by all. A former member who described the reasons for his resignation made similar comments:

I didn't stand for re-election, because there was no expertise in the panels and the people who got there. I think most important issues were overlooked. People have their own pet hobbyhorses about things.

It is, therefore, evident that the planning advisory committee should have competence in processes that enable everyone on the committee to become educated and aware of planning and design matters. Another former member felt that LAPAC was deviating from its own mandate of dealing with planning and development aspects, rather committee's sole task had become commenting on design aspects, not on planning matters:

Though planning and design aspects are indispensable phenomena, LAPAC is mostly dealing with design aspects and people got there making comments on design issues and think that these are planning problems. Some of the people are trying to become designers instead of planners. We are actually looking at the design problems rather than the planning problems.

This respondent added that many people were acting outside their field of expertise. For this reason, he found it was a waste of time for him to continue and so resigned. He believed the advisory committee should be formed by a group of people having knowledge of planning and design matters:

If the reason of the LAPAC is to get community input and you want the layman's view, then it is fair enough, but if you want informed comments, then you must have people with knowledge.

Another member, who resigned recently during the interviewing in September 2001, was critical of the Technical Officers' level of competence understanding of planning process; he was simultaneously critical of the other LAPAC members. The following reflects his concerns about the competence of Technical Officers:

Some committee members have knowledge and experience that is greater than PALM representatives. When the members may ask questions, the PALM representative is not competent enough to answer or does not have relevant experience to answer those questions. All they [PALM] have is some inexperienced young professionals.

The above discussion has given an indication that the LAPAC consultation process does not adequately facilitate educating the committee members as well as the wider public, but respondents saw the importance of introducing various planning laws and Acts to LAPAC members. Without a competent understanding of planning laws, guidelines of high quality sustainable development and the process of development approval, it is difficult for them to contribute effectively to the planning decisions, so as to give competent advice to the Minister for planning. A long-time LAPAC member said that LAPAC should promote formal and encourage informal learning activities, such as educating its own committee members and educating the wider public outside the LAPAC committee; the first is easier to achieve and to measure. The existing experience and knowledge of LAPAC members combined with continuing face-to-face discussions and access to planning documents is likely to be educational for to the members. To educate the public, the planning agency should organize outreach activities, such as planning workshops for the wider public.

This researcher asked all the committee members interviewed about the level of understanding they have reached on planning matters through their participation. Most of them had gained understanding of a wide range of community views and the political

processes in development approval without participating any formal outreach programs. Some architects and planners members on the committee said they already understood the planning process and development approvals, but they acknowledged that a wider range of community views and relevant concerns on planning had much value for planning decisions, and they believed that community concerns should be taken into account for greater community satisfaction. There were reports of increased individual understanding of development applications with less confusion about the process of development approval. The long-time members from all LAPACs reported a greater understanding of the planning process and the process of development approval. A few perceived themselves as having more confidence in the planning process; they were mostly people with professional expertise in planning, particularly in the Inner North and Manuka LAPACs. Some professional planners reported that they had sufficient expertise in planning and design matters, and so did not require any additional program to improve their planning understanding. However, they felt that residents and community groups had inadequate understanding of planning and therefore should not be included on the LAPAC to give planning advice. They agreed the importance of having representatives of the community on the advisory committee, but acknowledged that selection criteria should be formulated in such a way as to include people with informal knowledge of planning matters. Some architect-planners on the committee commented that a few members of the committee were unable to understand development applications, and could not even properly understand a map and its features, but continued to make comments on plans normally prepared by a group of professionals in fields such as architecture and urban planning. A member commented:

These people [LAPAC members other than business groups and ministerial appointees] don't understand how to read a plan, they cannot understand the difference between section and elevation, don't understand about Master Plans, don't know about contour points, and even cannot find the North point of the plan.

A business representative made similar comments. He believed that it was not the other members' responsibility to understand planning laws and the high-quality design guidelines. He thought that information provided to the committee members was well documented but some members were unable to understand it clearly through their

inability to read and understand a plan, and commented that planners were not responsible for writing an ABC of planning for the other members on the committee to make them understand. It is a long and a tedious learning process.

### **6.2.3 Evaluating Effectiveness: Communication**

In order to carry out its advisory role effectively, LAPAC requires adequate access to the information, and timely communication with the planning staff and other development proponents. LAPAC also needs to have contact with residents, community groups and the wider public to get their views on planning and development matters. However, interview results demonstrate that LAPAC does not have formal guidelines for communicating with planning staff, development proponents and wider community organizations. Communication in the whole LAPAC consultation process is unstructured and not supportive in sharing and exchanging planning information. Some regular members interviewed feel that senior Technical Officers are not always cooperative and approachable when related information is needed on development applications, and this lack of open communication limits the opportunity of some stakeholders to contribute effectively on development applications preventing them from participating in overall planning decisions. As a result of poor or suspicious relationships between committee members and Technical Officers, there is less effective communication and timely feedback that the community want.

In the absence of any formal feedback system, committee members are usually unaware of the comments and recommendations that are taken into account in the planning decisions. There is an informal system to let the committee members know about the decisions made by PALM, but correspondence between them is often very slow, and it was reported that LAPAC members were provided with a bare minimum of information. As a result, the committee members receive no details about the discussions and the acceptance or rejection of their recommendations. The LAPAC members interviewed observed that communication with PALM was better when the committee included more business representatives, who were believed to have a visibly close relation with planning staff. A community representative feels that communication between business representatives and planning staff assists the LAPAC in determining recommendations in a way PALM will find acceptable, as they believe business representatives normally look after developers' interests in the meetings.

The interviews with the wider public and LAPAC members indicated that the communication between them was quite frequent and regular. This communication includes regular attendance at the resident and community groups' meetings before scheduled LAPAC meetings, informal conversations, phone calls and emails. While the communication and feedback links between the LAPAC and other residents and community associations is very effective, some LAPAC members feel that communication with the other interested persons and community groups could be improved by providing them with LAPAC agendas and minutes. LAPAC convenors could play an effective role communicating with others, but they do not communicate effectively by sharing common planning information and making relevant comments on development applications. A resident member commented that the convenor of her LAPAC was not regular in responding to the emails sent by residents or community activists. She believes that the convenor does not read emails and does not feel it necessary to communicate with LAPAC members, letting them know about important planning events involving their neighbourhoods. She added:

There is a workshop on 'community needs assessment' [organized by PALM], as LAPAC members we have not been briefed before, not being informed by the convenor. Why should I type all the news from the *Chronicle* [a local newspaper] and send it to other members? It should either be PALM or the convenor to let us know about on-going planning activities. But we hardly heard about it.

It appears that there is general dissatisfaction with the methods of communication between LAPAC members and planning staff. Resident and community groups often send emails to Technical Officers asking for general information on current development applications, but it takes a long time to receive acknowledgement, even a brief reply lacking adequate explanation. Even if Technical Officers do reply to emails with a further tentative date to provide the information, this too comes with very little explanation. However, Technical Officers do not agree with the statement of the LAPAC member. A Technical Officer said:

Sometimes, I receive 20 emails from a resident representative asking to provide info, how can I do that? They have to come to the PALM shopfront to find documents ... *Land Act*, guidelines of HQSD. I cannot read the *Act* and give explanations over the phone. It is their responsibility to know the relevant *Act*.

Another LAPAC member interviewed acknowledged that there was a gap between LAPAC members and the planning authority in sharing planning information:

Mr. Clinton [name changed—a Technical Officer] is not cooperative or friendly to the new members communicating with each other. He hardly pays any attention to the members who want documents or survey reports with verbal explanations.

The researcher has noticed that members of the Manuka and Ginninderra LAPACs are very active in communication with other planning policy community. The convenor of Manuka LAPAC maintains regular contact with committee members to share information on important planning and development issues. Members of this LAPAC have internally a good communication, with the convenor as well with the LAPAC coordinator. The convenor also has close contact with the coordinator and praises the coordinator who works consistently for the committee, and is very regular in responding to queries regardless of their relevance to the development applications or related matters; however, the convenor is disappointed in communicating with Technical Officers on sharing planning information. A convenor interviewed commented:

The coordinator is very regular, because she does not have any value attachment to any DA, however, TOs [Technical Officers] are not regular with our questions. He [a Technical Officer] often takes a very long time to respond and changing TOs one after another also creates problems for us effectively communicating and understanding.

There is no specific or assigned Technical Officer for LAPAC meetings: it seems that whoever is free on that day can attend LAPAC meetings to represent PALM. A long-time LAPAC member commented that this was another important issue, resulting in ineffective communication between committee members and planning staff. All the

LAPAC members interviewed were unhappy about the variety of Technical Officers to LAPAC meetings. They feel that changing Technical Officers regularly makes a gap between Technical Officers and committee members in communicating each other.

Residents and community representatives on the LAPAC have regular contact with each other. Some of them have various community relations and involvement with residents' associations, community councils, and other planning and environment related organizations. All of them normally receive emails from a listserv discussion group maintained by a LAPAC convenor; the Manuka LAPAC has a single email discussion group from which all messages are directed. Apart from the individual correspondence of committee members, the convenor sends emails that contain community news to the local publications *The Belconnen Chronicle*, *The South Side Chronicle*, *Jamo*, *Narrabundah Pride*, and *TRA E-news*. This convenor also sends community news to all members with Internet access either at home or at work. Most recipients of *E-news* are neighbourhood residents and LAPAC members, it also reaches to PALM planning staff and ACT government officials concerned with relevant development applications, and a few NGOs that work on planning and environmental issues in the ACT.

The newsletter is sent periodically or monthly, and includes information on forthcoming association activities or meetings, the LAPAC agenda generally, and development actions and planning decisions that affect neighbourhoods. LAPAC, as a formal statutory body in the consultation process, has no newsletter to make the community at large aware of their agenda, but there is a regular notice and advertisement in *The Belconnen Chronicle*, about important topics to be discussed at the forthcoming LAPAC meeting. A member commented:

A large number of the community is being left out from the LAPAC agenda, because LAPAC activities have never been sufficiently advertised. Only concerned members, politicians and activists look at the *Chronicle*.

### *Communication through worldwide web*

PALM has an official website containing information about LAPAC (<http://www.palm.act.gov.au>)<sup>1</sup>, which contains information about LAPAC guides, protocol, and a list of six LAPACs. Some of the members use this website to gather information on current development applications, Master Plans, Variations to the Territory Plan, LAPAC agendas and meeting minutes. Information about LAPAC activities includes description and announcement of current agenda and minutes; description of organizational structure and opportunities for residents and business people to become involve in the consultation process. Information on each LAPAC includes a map of the suburbs covered by a LAPAC, the meeting date, time, venue and current agenda for the next meeting. This site also provides a number of links to LAPAC sites, all of which are identical in structure and formation. However, there are no links with other community organizations dealing with ACT planning matters. A member of the wider public commented that:

The only information I could obtain concerning LAPAC is about only the agenda and minutes. And again minutes are couple of months old, which has no importance to me. In addition to that, it has no contact details of the LAPAC representative of the suburbs.

Other members of the wider public interviewed made similar comments that because of privacy laws, names and particulars of LAPAC members are not available on the website. Since LAPAC members represent neighbourhoods, their particulars should be accessible to residents to facilitate representation of their neighbourhood constituency. One member of the wider public commented:

I cannot contact directly the LAPAC members, as I don't have their contact details. I've to contact them through the coordinator, which is absurd.

It appears that the wider public are concerned about the information provided on the LAPAC website and have the impression that it fails to make effective and timely

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<sup>1</sup> The address of the website has been changed to <http://www.actpla.act.gov.au> effective from 1 July 2003. This is due to the change of PALM's name to ACTPLA.



communication between LAPAC members and the wider public. It was suggested that the names of the members should be posted on the website, so that residents, the community, business people and appointees could have direct access to committee members and raise their concerns on planning issues.

A LAPAC member also raised the question of effective methods of communication:

We can make Internet facilities a method of communication with planning stakeholders, however, we are not making use of this facility to share information very quickly and effectively.

It was noticed that there was no formal listserv for the LAPAC members, which could be important in communication between members, planning staff, and development proponents. In the absence of formal communication among the planning policy community, there was apparent omission of important planning issues need to be discussed well in advance, but enthusiastic LAPAC convenors or members make their own efforts to establish communication through the electronic media and keep other members well informed about continuing and proposed activities in their suburbs.

An Inner North LAPAC member uses email regularly to disseminate information to residents and LAPAC members for monitoring neighbourhood conditions. This member commented that she received numerous email messages from residents, offering information from their own observations, or those of their neighbours or nearby residents. One member also said that in the past, community information was gathered through walking in the neighbourhood streets and by talking with residents. But LAPAC as an organization neither arranges any sort of activities nor establishes any email listserv for communication with members and enthusiastic residents. It seems LAPAC does not communicate effectively with residents and community groups, and thus is isolated from focusing on community issues jointly with others involved in planning decisions. All members of the residents' associations communicate with each other on development matters, but not as LAPAC members. A resident representative on LAPAC, who had regular contact with others, commented: 'I am doing this as residents' association member, not as a LAPAC member'. For these reasons this member suggests establishing

a coordinated system to have good communication among all the planning policy community. At present she feels alienated:

When, I attend LAPAC meetings, I feel alienated as if I've no contact with others. It seems a meeting of a business forum, not a forum dealing with local issues, neighbourhood's issues ... and planning stuff.

***Effective communication: visualization of spatial information***

One of the important issues in planning consultation is that participants have to make comments on the draft plans, which normally come with various spatial information, maps and figures. Participants in a consultation process often have difficulty in understanding spatial data, maps or other planning documents, these data may be in the form of digital or paper products displayed on maps and plans. Miscommunication and complications in understanding of spatial data can lead to mistrust amongst planning stakeholders. An effective participation process should therefore be one that uses spatial information in a way that participants can understand easily so they can make informed comments on draft plans. This study examined how the planning authority and other developers use spatial information and provide it to the planning stakeholders, and how it is perceived. This was examined through attending LAPAC meetings and observing how development proponents use geographic information and technologies to make planning stakeholders aware of their neighbourhoods, communities and the spatial features of the regions. LAPAC members interviewed were asked about how the planning authority provided spatial information and how they perceived this.

Communication with the planning policy community is often established discussing spatial information on planning documents, so visualization of spatial information given to the concerned participants has become an extremely important part of the planning process. Driel (2001, cited in Ghose and Huxhold, 2001b) claimed that 50 per cent of the human brain's neurones are involved in vision, and 3-D displays can stimulate more of these neurones and hence involve a larger portion of the brain in the problem-solving process. 3-D computer models can thus stimulate spatial reality, which will allow viewers to more quickly recognize and understand changes in elevation. In addition, visualization tools enable viewers to see how new land-use and other policies can change the

environment and physical structure of neighbourhoods (Ghose and Huxhold 2001b). More importantly, the visualization technique can show the outcome of a proposed development program and assess its desirability before the development work begins. With regard to visualizing spatial information in LAPAC meetings, committee members commented that this was the most inefficient and ineffective part of the LAPAC consultation process. They often had difficulty understanding spatial information displayed by developers and in many cases by the PALM's Technical Officers. Their frustration often leads to miscommunication and mistrust in planners. A LAPAC member asserted:

It is rather difficult for us to understand what is the building height of a DA and front or side setbacks allowed by the Territory Plan. Maps and drawings are far way from us. Who will go there [where it is stuck on the wall or hung up] to see their [developers'] maps and drawings? Only Clinton [name changed] goes too close to the map for understanding. I'm nearly 75, and cannot walk up to there.

It is evident that with an efficient visualization process, the participants in a consultation could experience and visually understand the effect of proposed development programs in an intuitive and interactive way, and so be well informed about the possible effects on the neighbourhoods and their surrounding environment. This could lead them to produce a community vision that would possibly be adaptable by the planners for final decision-making. Talen (2000) commented that urban visualization with any forms of multimedia could be a valuable tool for designers and urban planners. The ability to visualize potential modifications to the urban fabric and their actual context would allow planners and designers to evaluate alternative options rapidly, in more detail, and for lower cost than through more traditional analysis. The introduction of visualization would demonstrate the results of planning process visible to those concerned with planning decisions, and allow the wider public to view the proposed changes to their environment in a realistic manner (Talen, 2000).

The importance of using geographic information and 3D models in the public participation process have been acknowledged in the planning literature (Ghose and Huxhold 2001a). All the participants in planning consultation processes make directly or

indirect comments on the spatial information that comes in the form of development applications, so communication and understanding of maps and plans are of great importance for making useful comments. Plans consist of geographical information and spatial descriptions about a place and its landuse, so spatial understanding is an essential part of planning consultation models, without which it is rather difficult to contribute effectively on any development application.

In the case of LAPAC, every DA and Master Plan comes with maps and architectural drawings, and members have to comment of their merits and faults in considering existing landuse practices. Accordingly, developers come to the LAPAC meetings with the proposed DA and its various features in the form of maps and drawings. A copy of all planning documents is normally provided to the committee members representing a particular LAPAC neighbourhood. Some resident members interviewed were dissatisfied with the maps and drawings provided, and with the way the spatial information was displayed and presented in the meetings. A resident member commented:

The architect sticks the map far ahead of me, I hardly see anything there; without details of maps, it is rather difficult to communicate about the contexts of development applications.

Members are greatly concerned about the use and display of geographic information. They prefer to see regular use of 3D models in presenting development applications, whether big or small. Some developers have presented development applications using 3D models, which LAPAC members believed to be an effective way of communication among the planning policy community. Some developers who were also business representatives on LAPACs were strongly critical of the LAPAC members' competence in understanding spatial information. A business representative commented that LAPAC members could not point to the north point of a map, so he felt it was not worthwhile to introduce geographic information systems in the LAPACs. He was totally opposed to the concept of planning advisory committees that included diverse representatives of the community.

Some regular members are critical of the way the geographic information is displayed and presented in planning documents. They noticed that poor use of plans at the LAPAC meetings led to ineffective communication between planning staff and LAPAC members. A LAPAC member said:

The development proponent sticks a map on the wall with the help of a Technical Officer. The hand drawings sometimes leave out the patterns and location of various attributes. We cannot concentrate on one map as they [developers] keep changing one after another. They should have explained clearly each and every one.

However, there has been high praise for particular developers who always provide 3D models for presenting development applications, but this does not often happen, so it is difficult for members to become familiar with the maps. Developers disagree with the comments made by LAPAC members:

We normally present a DA more than one time before the LAPAC members. Initially, they might have difficulty to understand, however, the next time they should understand.

It appears that developers are not very satisfied about explaining maps and plans to the committee members. They blame each other. One LAPAC convenor commented:

I've to go very close to the map to understand. Others are reluctant to come forward to see the map clearly.

This statement indicates that LAPAC members are concerned about visualizing spatial information in a meaningful and effective way to communicate with each other. The blurred and inadequate information displayed on maps prevents the committee members from making comments on DAs and Master Plan. A member raised the necessity of providing every member of the committee with the neighbourhood indicators about the areas of concern including pertinent information on demographics features, community facilities, housing, landuse planning, commercial and retail space, transport and traffic

conditions. Interviews with resident members indicated that most of the LAPAC members were not satisfied with the information provided through maps and plans.

LAPAC members were asked to evaluate the use and visualization of geographic information in support or clarification of the development applications. Most of the resident and community representatives interviewed agreed that it was difficult to understand all the planning terms used in the maps and drawings, and felt that insufficient information was provided in displayed maps and plans. They were also concerned about continuously changing maps in consecutive meetings. Normally, the committee ask for modifications in proposed development applications, if they feel modification is relevant to the betterment of the community. Accordingly, developers produce changes to aspects, which committee members have not even proposed to modify. A LAPAC member said:

Sometimes we are lost when we see the second stage of maps, where little changes are made, which we cannot compare with the initial one.

Moreover, developers give hardly any additional information in the form of maps of areas surrounding the proposed development applications, so it is difficult to understand the whole situation at a glance. A LAPAC member commented:

Say B13<sup>1</sup> allows a nine-storey building, but we don't see information on nearby areas whether it is B11 or B12. If we see them together we could have given comments on over- shadowing.

But business representatives on the committee have different views. A business representative of Inner North LAPAC commented that every member of the committee should have a clear understanding of ACT land zoning and a working knowledge of the Territory Plan, which is the landuse plan for the ACT; and that is not the developer's responsibility to make them understand about land zoning in the area surrounding a proposed development application.

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<sup>1</sup> B13 is a part of landuse zoning in ACT. There are three types of landuse zoning for residential and commercial development: B11 allows two storey, B12 three storey and B13 nine storey buildings (PALM, 2000a).

It appears that DA presentations normally show the existing landuse of the areas; the development may have a greater impact on the adjacent areas too, but committee members often do not receive maps of surrounding areas to get a broader view of a development application. Developers do not give the details on adjacent areas. A resident member of Ginninderra LAPAC commented:

I have reason to believe that developers do not come intentionally with sufficient maps and plans to support their DAs, in order to avoid a scenario, which may change their original plan.

Another member of the Ginninderra LAPAC commented that they were given geographic information without details of a neighbourhood. One LAPAC convenor indicated that this information was required by the LAPAC to understand how to improve the neighbourhood housing conditions in the areas where redevelopment pressure was very high. He added:

We are not given maps that show housing conditions declining and housing stability and not given information at any time about numbers boarded-up and vacant and the numbers of absentee rental properties.

It seems that committee members are not able to monitor effectively the condition of their own neighbourhoods and others. The absence of relevant geographic information for the participants impedes the assessment of changes in neighbourhood conditions and to evaluation of the quality of development and redevelopment activities. A member of Majura LAPAC commented:

What we need is a comprehensive property database with user-friendly software. In addition we also need a Territory Plan that clearly indicates relevant rules for my areas.

The committee felt the need of a property database, which they could use well and understand in making comments on development applications. Information on changes in the neighbourhood as well as information gathered from residents might be combined in a

database. A LAPAC convenor commented that the property database could contain information more geographically and historically comprehensive than the information they were given during the LAPAC meetings. Members of the wider public stated that being able to maintain and analyse information about the conditions and problems in all neighbourhoods could enhance their efforts to identify problems and to formulate suitable solutions. Most importantly, LAPAC as group could use the information and analysis to challenge the accuracy and legitimacy of the PALM's information and analysis.

#### **6.2.4 Evaluating Effectiveness: Relationships and Trust**

It was observed that relationship between the LAPACs and Technical Officers varied notably, depending upon the Technical Officers in question and the planning and development matters at hand. A long-time member of West Belconnen LAPAC described the relationship between LAPACs and PALM as both positive and negative. Sometimes, it is 'cooperative', 'very helpful the Technical Officers in response to questions', and 'fairly professional in explaining the planning and development issues'; sometimes it is 'adversarial' and 'antagonistic'. It was also observed that the relationship between committee members and planning staff was not always confrontational, but sometimes discussions on development applications ended up in heated debate. Some members feel that there is still a very amicable working relationship among all the planning policy community, and LAPAC is a way for the community to express their neighbourhood concerns. Other regular members comment that the planners are trying to control the overall consultation process and also control the planning agendas to be sent to LAPACs for their contribution. A former convenor agreed that the planning authority sends development applications for community input at the end of the process in order to get approval within a time-frame. The relationship deteriorates when members feel planning authority is intentionally delaying sending development applications in order to avoid greater opposition from the community. One community representative stated that he does not want to 'go head-to-head' against the Technical Officer, but has felt frustration when he realized that an application was designed to get approved without much obstruction.

However, all the LAPAC members interviewed feel that the LAPAC coordinator and support staff at the front desk, including the director of the Territory Planning Branch, are very helpful and supportive to the advisory committee and its activities. But members



have some reservations about senior planners, who they feel are not always supportive or approachable in providing necessary documents.

The interviews with former members indicate that some LAPACs do not have a cooperative relationship with others in the planning policy community. The poor relationship among proponents, the resident and community representatives, the business representative and the Technical Officers has been deeply rooted in the context of the consultation process. As discussed, there is conflict among these three groups in the way they see their roles in the public participation process. LAPAC believes its role is to be active in bringing forward planning and design issues to the planning authority. Business representatives feel that LAPAC is going beyond its Terms of Reference; Technical Officers feel that LAPAC is not qualified to dictate the planning process, but is only eligible to raise community concerns. As a result, there is a very little effective collaboration among the three groups, which limits the opportunity for the committee to contribute effectively to the planning decisions. Burley Griffin, Manuka and Inner North LAPACs provide a good example of the poor relationship within these three LAPACs. According to some members of the LAPACs, the antagonism has increased; former members of many LAPACs declined to stand in the next election to renew their membership partly because of the continuing animosity among them.

Some developers have similar views about LAPAC: one commented that he was overwhelmed by emails from activists, and felt that responding to their queries was a waste of time. He further added:

If activists want to know something that I know, I should say, 'go to the uni and do some planning courses as I did'.

Overall, developers' views of the LAPAC consultation progress are not very positive: they see it as wasting time and delaying approvals for necessary development. One commented that LAPAC should be commenting at the strategic level of planning matters, not on every issue-specific design and policy matters, which should be the concern of planning professionals and design experts.

Resident representatives are far more concerned about redevelopment than are other representatives on LAPAC. There are two polarized views with 'no middle ground' on particular development and redevelopment issues. Sometimes there is no agreement on issues to which the committee members give different values. Resident and community groups mostly oppose the multi-units development in the inner city area whereas business and Ministerial appointees support any development applications that propose to build multi-units in the suburbs. This conflict often occurs in the LAPAC meetings and PALM has to explain the Territory Plan, about existing landuse and possible variation to the Territory Plan. It seems the LAPAC meeting is a place for giving personal views on multi-unit development, what is liked or disliked. Always there are two views: for and against. One Burley Griffin LAPAC member interviewed commented:

This is entirely a process of making personal comments only, not making any collective decision. Some are supporting; some are not.

Another member of this LAPAC described this situation as purposely designed by the planning authority not to succeed. In his opinion, LAPAC as a group does not make any decision, nor give advice to the Minister, nor suggests anything, it simply talks about development applications and the coordinator just records the comments. This process has given PALM relative autonomy in making decisions without any collective advice as suggestions from the community.

The Convenor of Ginninderra LAPAC noted that the formality of meetings needed to be increased to ensure that the meetings ran as smoothly as possible. At one meeting some issues arose concerning the role of Technical Officers and presenters. The Convenor pointed out that problems would arise for the LAPAC if developers did not want to attend with DAs in a scheduled meeting; equally, DA presenters should understand genuine and complete consultation. Ideally, presenters should attend to answer questions and provide information to the LAPAC, not try to convince people of a particular view:

I have come across some developers who want to point out only those questions to them, which they find comfortable and convenient to answer.

This convenor observed that some presenters were better suited to the consultation and that LAPAC would need to deal, in a formal way, with those who were not. He suggested that members should remain calm in discussions and that he might intervene to steer the meeting if he felt it was moving off the track:

I have experience that sometimes we talk with very unnecessary issues and express personal feelings towards other members. This might not relate to the current agenda.

The LAPAC case study analysis showed that all LAPACs were having difficulties in their relationships with the factions. These difficulties limit the ability of the LAPACs to fulfil their role effectively, as they generate an unpleasant and hostile atmosphere on many occasions. A poor relationship with PALM's Technical Officers has at times resulted in the diversion of essential energies from the task at hand, and contributed to bureaucratic backlogs and delays.

The Inner North and Manuka LAPACs also demonstrated that the committee operates in an adversarial and confrontational environment and there is a general unwillingness to cooperate among the proponents of differing views. The Technical Officers interviewed often feel that the LAPAC is overstepping its mandate and is naïve in the planning process, and this creates trouble and additional work for both PALM and Technical Officers. Some Technical Officers do not feel that the LAPAC should have any role in planning decisions, or that planners should be accountable to the LAPAC for their decisions. Therefore, despite a polite atmosphere, PALM's Technical Officers often feel that the LAPAC is overstepping its boundary and infringing on the responsibilities of the planners.

#### **6.2.5 Evaluating Effectiveness: Objective-driven**

One of the important criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of a participation process is to analyse whether the process achieved the authority's objectives, and the level of participants' satisfaction. Oceau (1999) notes that authority, if not independent, normally implements the objectives of a political party and its planning policies. Other interest groups consisting of community-based organizations, enthusiastic individuals, planning professionals and political parties, may also have some defined objectives to achieve

through a consultation process. The benefit of evaluating the authority's objectives is to understand whether the objectives are met, and to identify the areas of concern that need to be addressed; this will lead to formulating the necessary remedial actions for a better process. The authority may find the existing processes do not require any adjustment, but other interest groups, either collective or institutionalized interest groups (Lightbody, 1995), may find it differently; thus the views of interest groups and participants becoming increasingly prevalent in determining the effectiveness of a participation process.

The main objective of the establishment of LAPAC by the Liberal government was to engage the community in a more coherent and transparent way, so that the community is heard and given importance in the planning decisions (PALM, 2000a). Similarly, participants have also pre-conceived expectations from the consultation process of being heard and having adequate opportunities to put their concerns into the planning process. This study discussed the satisfaction level of all LAPAC members interviewed along with others including political leaders, town planners, community leaders and academics, and examined whether their expectations were met through the LAPAC consultation process.

### *Participants' satisfaction*

All committee members interviewed were asked about their overall levels of satisfaction with the current process of public consultation. In general, members expressed a moderately low level of satisfaction. However, dissatisfaction varies across the LAPACs: in the Manuka LAPAC, all resident and community representatives are dissatisfied, but Ministerial appointees and business representatives are not Ministerial appointees and business representatives were also found not happy with many of the representatives from resident and community groups. Inner North and Burley Griffin LAPACs also express high level of dissatisfaction on the overall LAPAC consultation process. The high level of dissatisfaction is perhaps generated in these LAPACs by the high demand for re-development work in the both LAPAC areas, the Inner North LAPAC in particular.

The main city and its adjacent suburbs are in the area of the Inner North LAPAC. The majority of Inner North LAPAC members are dissatisfied with the high-density development around the City Centre. Residents and community representatives in Inner North LAPAC commented that the planning authority is deviating from preserving the National Capital as a 'Garden City' and 'Bush Capital'; they also believe that when self-

Government started in this Territory with the Liberal Party, the party started selling land to developers. However, some business representatives on this LAPAC have different opinions about high-density development in the City area and believe that high-density development and urban consolidation are inevitable, being demands of the present time. A business representative commented:

There is market demand. Developers are responding to the demand to provide services to meet present-day demands. There is pressure in the Civic area for multi-unit developments. For these reasons, we are developing multi-units. It is our duty to quantify the demand of the present market. We consulted the market and found the demand for developing high-rise building in the central business district.

Resident and community representatives interviewed acknowledge that there is still a high demand for dwellings in the areas close to Civic, but there is enough land available in the Gungahlin area, and developers can develop there. Residential and community representatives are not always in favour of high-density development in the areas close to Civic. A convenor stated:

We are not doing any good things. Only stopping bad things, not promoting good things.

It was observed that those who are mostly satisfied with the present process of consultation primarily represent business groups on the LAPAC. The interviews show that the most satisfied persons are either business representatives or appointed by the Minister; resident representatives from all the LAPACs show a high level of dissatisfaction.

The planning spokesperson of the Australian Labor Party also made comments on the LAPAC process and evaluated that LAPAC was established as token gesture to consultation. He commented:

The variations of the Territory Plan by and large are not driven either by LAPAC or PALM to improve or change the land use in the particular location. Instead, it is driven by the individual requests of development proponents who decide that they want to do some sorts of development in the particular location. LAPAC has no role but only making comments on decided development applications. So it is driven by the individual developer rather than more strategic and holistic views of what the demands are to change the land use in the area and how they meet community needs.

The DA approval process through the committee appears to be nothing more than a formality, in which business representatives normally support the DA (in some cases DA lodged by their own offices) and come to the meeting to have their private interests served; they are therefore satisfied, but perhaps, at the expense of other legitimate community interests which carry less weight in the planning process. LAPAC members revealed that their goals were not met through the LAPAC process.

Those who expressed dissatisfaction were examined more closely during face-to-face interviews. They were found across all the LAPACs. Most of the former members who had resigned from the LAPACs expressed dissatisfaction with the LAPAC consultation process and with its implementing body, PALM. There are several causes for their resignation from the committees; most were dissatisfied because their comments and suggestions were not given any importance. After serving on LAPAC for a couple of years they formed the impression that it was a waste of time and had little effect on planning decisions, so they stepped down from the committee. Although the resigned members were completely dissatisfied with the consultation process, they said they had high hopes not from the committee but from the process, which could accommodate greater community concerns into the planning decisions.

There were eleven LAPAC members interviewed who had resigned from the committees for various reasons; some had been committee members, some had been committee conveners. They identified various reasons for their resignations: nobody indicated personal reasons, rather they accused the planning authority of not incorporating their recommendations, which they believe were rational and legitimate, to be incorporated

into the planning decisions. The following comment expresses the dissatisfaction of a former LAPAC member:

I found it [LAPAC consultation process] was a publicity mechanism for the Government, instead of an effective tool. Frankly, I think it [LAPAC] has no effect on the community. It is really a waste of efforts and a waste of time.

This former LAPAC member had resigned from a LAPAC although he believed he was competent to be a part of the consultation process. He added:

I believe LAPAC is poorly promoted in the community. I think most of the people in the community have very little understanding about LAPAC ... People don't know what the LAPAC really does. There is a poor recognition in the community of the LAPAC and its roles and understanding, because it was intentionally designed not to be promoted enough.

#### *Interest groups' satisfaction*

The City of Canberra has over forty community and residents' groups from across the ACT concerned with environment, planning and development matters (PACTT, 2001). These associations work to develop a coordinated influence on planning and development in the ACT and are very active to keep the character of the Bush Capital and the Garden City. To maintain this character the associations also initiate some activities that are notable in the planning process. They normally meet monthly and organize discussions to address issues with other community groups.

In 1999, Planning the ACT Together (PACTT) prepared a document titled *A Strategic Plan for Canberra—Interim Community Proposal*, which set out the community's needs in relation to planning and development matters. It defined the community's understanding of balanced and planned development and raised a number of significant concerns, including the protection of open space, areas of national heritage significance and the shortcomings of existing legislation. It also addressed related areas like transport, land release, land sale and economic issues.

The convenor of PACTT is also a convenor of a LAPAC. Other organizations also frequently participate in the LAPAC meetings to register their concerns on particular planning issues. Since a LAPAC meeting is open to all, anyone can attend and ask question with permission from the chair. Almost in every meeting there are some enthusiastic members or affected people attend; they are allowed to present their own ideas of planning issues, but have no voting power. Discussed below are the views of political leaders, planning professionals and planning academics, and their level of satisfaction with the current consultation process for planning decisions.

Most comments were on LAPAC's consultation process in planning and development matters, and were directly focused on the lack of strategic plans. The views and comments of political leaders and planning professional were noted in a number of workshops on election issues organized by PACTT in 2001, all of which the researcher attended. Four political parties, the Australian Democrats, Liberal Party of Australia, ACT Greens Party, and Australian Labor Party participated in the discussion and commented on planning and development matters. Six issues were discussed in the meeting: public participation was one of them. The issues were: (1) Strategic Planning and the City's Role as the National Capital; (2) Planning and Land Control Institutional Arrangements; (3) Community Participation; (4) Open Space, Infill and Urban Consolidation; (5) Residential Code; and (6) Trees. Apart from the political parties, some planning professionals and academics were also invited separately by PACTT to evaluate the effectiveness of the current consultation process. Tony Powell, a retired town planner was also invited to deliver his concerns on planning and consultation. His comments are systematically presented and analysed in this study in order to understand the breadth and depth of planning decisions from the point of view of an experienced planning professional.

A representative of the *Australian Democrats* commented on both PALM as a planning agency and its consultation processes through LAPACs. He was critical of the PALM as a planning authority:

PALM has been a development agency, not a planning agency. We have seen politicization of the public services. Consultation has taken place later and later.



For example, Symonston Jail consultation process was at the end instead of the beginning.

An Independent MLA also commented on the current consultation process through LAPAC and felt that comments from the community and residents were not taken into account by the planning authority:

The consultation process has fallen down. The incoming government [October 2001] will have to take notice that LAPACs, Community Councils and Groups have their views.

The *ACT Greens Party* praised the current *ACT Consultation Protocol*; the leader commented that it was good, but not used well by the Government. This party clarified their position on the Terms of Reference of the consultation process and observed that other parties might say they would do what people wanted; however, the ACT Greens made a different comment on planning decisions and the consultation process. She added:

Greens are not just in politics to do what the community wants. The Greens have a clear set of principles and objectives and want to work with the community to achieve the principles and objectives.

Another Greens member who was a LAPAC member commented on the whole planning decision and consultation process:

Many planners have made decisions, and then just use the LAPACs as a parallel system to explain why they've made the decisions they have already made. There, needs to be a big cultural change in community participation and it hasn't yet been properly taken up in the ACT.

When asked to comment on introducing an independent planning authority instead of government control, he commented that a totally independent planning authority was no good; it would still have to be linked to the ultimate authority of the Legislative Assembly. But another member of the ACT Green Party and Member of the Legislative

Assembly supported an independent planning authority, but expected that there must be accountability through the Legislative Assembly. This member also supported the Minister's call-in power to approve development applications when appropriate.

The Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister of the ACT attended the workshop and commented on the above six election issues. The Deputy Chief Minister was in charge of Urban Services and Planning.

Since *Liberal Party* introduced LAPACs for community consultation about planning, they were very optimistic about the LAPAC process of getting community views for the planning decisions. However, the Chief Minister felt that there should be a change in the decision-making process to allow more people to be involved in planning. He wanted to see LAPACs as an inevitable part of the planning process to make more cohesive and transparent planning decisions that would ensure greater community participation. That was the reason, the Chief Minister believed, why the Liberal Government five years or so ago created the idea of Local Area Planning Advisory Committees. However, he commented that LAPACs should remain as an advisory committee to raise community concerns in the planning decision. He added:

LAPACs are not the supreme governors of what happens within their areas. They are an advisory process and they tell the planning process what the people in the local area think, or what a certain subset of the people in the area thinks. It's a step toward more actively involving the community and it should evolve further.

The Planning Minister also acknowledged the importance of public consultation in planning decisions and commented that the consultation process should be constructive and strike a balance between local and whole:

In principle, people who live in an area don't have exclusive ownership of the values of the area. The rest of the city has a right to take part in decisions. We have to strike a balance between territory-wide interest and the interests of the local people. LAPACs are the first step in the exercise, but obviously we have further to go.

Two frontbench members of the *Australian Labor Party* attended this workshop. Both agreed that a strategic plan was badly needed: in the absence of a strategic approach, current 'planning' was reactionary rather than active and the current system reacted only to development proposals rather than adhering to a coherent strategic vision for the city. They also commented that the current Territory Plan is and was intended to be, a policy document rather than a planning document and therefore needed to be supplemented.

The planning spokesperson of the Australian Labor Party (now Minister for Planning since November 2001) argued that the best approach was to develop a series of micro-strategies for each locality, (such as the 'Inner North'), and for each of the town centres. These strategic plans would include social and transport planning as well as land use planning. The spokesperson also commented on the current consultation process for planning decisions and proposed the introduce of 'Neighbourhood Planning Groups' (NPG)<sup>1</sup> instead of the current LAPACs process, if Labor were elected in the forthcoming Territory election in October 2001:

Under the Labor Government [if elected] the primary mechanism for community participation will be through 'Neighbourhood Planning Groups'. They [NPGs] would be engaged, in particular, in the preparation of Labor's micro-strategies for the localities. These groups would replace the current LAPACs: they would cover smaller localities and would be better resourced; their existence and proceedings would be communicated to the public more effectively; and developers would be required to engage them in a more defined and efficient way.

Though, LAPAC plays a very important role in planning decisions, it has little influence on the final decisions. Tony Powell, a retired planner in the ACT who was a commissioner of the NCDC (1975-1985), stated that PALM gives only lip service to the committee; it says their comments have been taken into account, or will be given high priority in the final decision, but the agency's preconceived idea on development applications is the final one; it hardly deviates from its original propositions. Powell added that LAPAC's concerns are given little importance: it is the Assessment Officers

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the proposed Neighbourhood Planning Groups has been changed to Community Planning Forums (CPF) in May 2003, with effect from July 2003.

who are important. Assessment Officers examine a DA going through existing planning guidelines; they use a two-column method in which selection from the Territory Plan's criteria are in the first column with check boxes in the second column to signify the extent to which the Assessment Officers consider the development applications meet the criteria in the first column. They do not look at community concerns over the development applications. Unskilled Assessment Officers with their managerial mentality address planning matters. In most cases, the Assessment Officers do not even make a site inspection, and DAs for medium to high-density proposals were fast tracked without assessment.

Powell is also concerned about the absence of skilled planners in the highest positions in PALM, and thus the lack of planning understanding and of importance given to fair and effective community participation in the planning decisions. PALM's CEO is also the Chief Planner, but the current occupant of the position is not qualified as a planner. In Powell's view, the whole planning system is close to a state of collapse, especially as PALM staff do not have the necessary skills to effectively communicate with the residents and community groups and to understand their expectations about planning outcomes. Further he commented that the Territory Plan was considerably weakened by the Assembly under the Liberal regime in 1997-2001, and is no longer rigorous or specific enough to operate as a development controller. The objectives and principles in the Territory Plan are never applied to development assessments. The planning system as it stands is bordering on corrupt. Canberra has the fewest appeal rights in Australia in relation to planning issues and has moved from being the most planned city to the least planned city.

### **6.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

LAPAC is an advisory committee comprising people from all parts of the community with the purpose of giving advice to the planning authority on various planning and development matters. LAPAC has functioned quite efficiently as a committee, putting forth a wide variety of suggestions and concerns on planning and development matters from among the wider public in the LAPAC neighbourhoods. LAPAC members are respected by most of the wider public for spending their valuable time to protect their neighbourhoods from scattered developments. However, the outcomes and effectiveness

analysis in this chapter highlights a number of issues faced by LAPAC. Of particular importance are with its roles and operational policies in the broader context of policy planning and the planning process administered by the planning authority. All the LAPAC members agreed that LAPAC operates in an advisory capacity and provides community views on development applications. However, with respect to the effectiveness of the LAPAC as a good platform of public participation, the members of the planning policy community are not in agreement, rather they feel it is tokenism. Some members feel that LAPAC has been effectively used as a link between the community and the planning authority. They also feel that LAPAC has great potential to be a platform for public participation, but has yet to achieve this.

Some LAPAC members agree that things are changing and evolving over time. Currently, PALM has agreed to discuss officially in the LAPAC meetings the grounds on which the community concerns and LAPAC advice and recommendations are accepted or rejected by the planning authority. However, despite the fact that planning staff recognizes LAPAC as a voluntary extension of the planning department, not a separate arm of the planning process, its primary role is to provide planning advice and not policy direction. In this respect, PALM planning staff feel that LAPAC is not qualified to make broader policy recommendations and to be involved at the early stages of the planning process, rather it should remain community-based advisory group to voice only community concerns to be incorporated in the planning decisions.

The wider public have mixed feeling towards LAPAC activities. Some are very supportive and are aware that they have residents and community representatives on LAPAC. They have always hoped that LAPAC would be a public-oriented committee, which would ensure a more active approach to planning. The overall feeling of the wider public is that LAPAC has not lived up to their expectations and they would prefer to see LAPAC involved in the policy process in such a way as to allow it along with the public to participate in open dialogue about planning decisions.

To summarize the evaluation of the effectiveness criteria in the LAPAC consultation process, each criterion is given in Table 6.1. This study evaluated the effectiveness criteria on a three-point scale (SM, SS, and NS) indicating 'satisfy most criteria', 'satisfy some criteria' and 'not satisfy the criteria'.

**Table 6.1: Summary of effectiveness evaluation in the consultation process**

Criteria	Evaluation	Brief description
Defined Role	SS	Most of the residents and community members on the LAPAC believe that they are competent enough to play an advisory role in consultation; however, they are not effective, compared to business people who have professional ties with the planning agency. Business people on the committee believe that they are competent to play the defined role, but except the resident and community members are not.
Promote Learning	NS	The Consultation process is also a process of learning. In this case the LAPAC process has no system to make all members aware of planning matters, not even basic things such the procedure of development approvals.
Communication	NS	Most of the members are dissatisfied with the communication with each other. There is no good communication either between PALM and the committee or among members on the committee. Sometimes PALM takes very long time to respond to member queries.
Relationships and Trust	NS	LAPAC seems divided into two groups, resident and community groups on one side, and business representatives and Ministerial appointees on the other. They acknowledge that the relationship is adversarial. They have lost trust in each other.
Objective-driven	SS	The community and residents have few expectations; however, they acknowledge being often heard by the agency. They are not fully satisfied with the process, but acknowledge some improvement on the issues they mentioned for rectification.

## **CHAPTER 7: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapters Five and Six evaluated the proposed criteria of fairness and effectiveness of the participation process through Planning Advisory Committees. The criteria were evaluated by critically examining the existing LAPAC context and its operational processes; conclusions were drawn after discussion of significant issues identified by LAPAC members and others involved in planning decisions. Although LAPAC members expected that through the LAPAC consultation process their advice and recommendations would be considered by the planning agency as community input, they often believed this did not happen. Residents and community representatives on the committee particularly felt they were not influential in the planning decisions and that it was developers who had the most influence.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss these negative implications of the consultation process and specifically, to present a critical analysis of LAPAC's approach to public participation by examining key issues involving LAPAC members and others in the planning policy, to show how the existing context and process of a planning advisory committee may be improved. This chapter also identifies the barriers to fairness and effectiveness of the participation process in planning advisory committees. The analysis is divided into two categories: (1) differences in perceived understanding of the context and procedural fairness and effectiveness of the consultation process; and (2) identification of barriers to fairness and effectiveness.

The following discussion expands beyond the analysis of the interviews and encompasses information provided in the previous two chapters; it both interprets and discusses the criteria, using interviews, observations and documentary data to understand perceptions of individuals involved in consultation processes.

### **7.2 DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED UNDERSTANDING OF FAIRNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS**

LAPAC is a committee of diverse people comprising residents, community groups, business people and Ministerial appointees; it includes people with professional and non-professional planning expertise; non-professional planning experts are those who have

long been involved with the consultation process and become proficient in planning matters. The perceptions of the varied groups about the consultation process and its outcomes are different and conflicting. They mainly indicate the negative aspects of the current consultation process, which requires immediate attention to make it fairer and more effective. Therefore, this section highlights the perceived negative aspects of consultation and the expectations of the planning policy community.

### 7.2.1 The Limited Opportunity for Learning

Involvement in the participation process has always been an opportunity for the participants to learn more about it. While participants may be expected to learn a great deal about the details of planning decision-making from their continuing activities, in the case of the LAPACs the learning process has not been successful. The criterion *promote learning* is especially important when a committee comprises people of diverse backgrounds, sharing information with each other to contribute effectively to the outcomes of the consultation. The LAPAC consultation processes lack the opportunity to educate the participants on planning and development matters, because there is no opportunity for this within the PALM administrative process.

New members on the committee expect to be adequately briefed about the context, operational process, and results of planning decisions. Most particularly, what is needed at the beginning of the consultation process is a working knowledge of planning laws, the approval process and the design guidelines with which development proponents should comply; and familiarity with associated planning information such as the Territory Plan, Guidelines for achieving High Quality Sustainable Design (HQSD) and the administrative process of development approval. Other information related to development applications is also important in making useful comments. However, the researcher noticed that new members were not adequately briefed on planning laws and design guidelines, particularly the process of development approval, although understanding of these issues is fundamental if the members are to comment on development applications. A LAPAC member, by profession a planner, asserted that the planning authority was not sufficiently committed to organizing workshops or orientation programs for members to help them understand planning and design matters. Without such programs, new members are not competent to make comment on development applications. A business representative said that:



Having served for over five years or so, a member asks what does the Y-Plan mean? Is it Territory Plan? How do you expect informed comments ... on HQSD stuff?

However, there are different views among others involved with planning decisions. Some resident members believe that the planning authority should help the committee members to adequately understand the decision-making process and, most importantly the process of development approval; but at the same time, members should be interested enough to learn about the relevant planning rules and design guidelines in order to make competent comments.

The researcher observed that PALM does not organize any educational activities for the LAPAC members. It seems that planning understanding is the sole responsibility of committee members; PALM can do nothing to educate members to understand planning issues and related matters. But planning understanding should not be left to the committee members, the planning authority has a major responsibility to organize outreach programs to provide an organized process that members should follow throughout their tenure. In this context Webler (1992) comments that a competent consultation process is not fully an individual task, or personal matter, rather it is procedural competence, which ensures adequate access to the information and easy-to-understand planning documents and helps discourse participants to make informed comments on planning initiatives. PALM does not do this, so new members take a long time to become familiar with the consultation process and particularly the process and guidelines of development approval.

### **7.2.2 Lack of Adequate Training and Communication Skills**

Long-time members of the committee are always critical of the planning staff. They feel that planners need more training to improve their communication skills. Some non-professional planning experts on LAPAC raise concerns about the skill and efficiency of planners in communicating with all others involved in planning policy, particularly with the LAPAC members. They believe that planners need training on how to conduct effective consultations with planning advisory committees; they also need skill in arranging planning workshops, understanding the social values of residents regarding

planning decisions, and competently explaining planning laws and design guidelines. Some experienced members on the committee feel that planners have only temporary obligations to attend particular LAPACs and often show no serious commitment to community concerns. Some tend to skip the members' concerns on the planning issues; often they cannot provide the necessary planning information to the LAPAC members. This is not the case in all LAPACs: PALM usually nominates experienced planners to some LAPACs, which experience high pressure for development in their areas, and many development applications to be approved in a limited time. Manuka and Inner North LAPACs are the example of representing PALM by experienced planners; but the other four LAPACs have no specific planners to represent the planning authority.

The researcher interviewed six planners and found that none had received any formal training in conducting the public participation process with a regular planning advisory committee. All of them said that they had adequate formal training on conducting planning workshops on community need assessments, and on urban design projects, but they did not feel special training was necessary for public consultation with planning advisory committees; they believed that skills in public participation were innate and could not be acquired through training. Instead skills could be learned through trial and error. Within the PALM administrative systems, there are currently no training and outreach facilities to guide the planners in the development of public participation strategies and in effectively conducting the consultation process. There is a consultation manual prepared by the ACT Chief Minister's Department entitled *Consultation Manual for the ACT*, which gives advice on both statutory and non-statutory consultations, but few planners seemed aware of this consultation manual.

Comments made by the PALM planners indicated their lack of understanding the importance and complexity of conducting the public participation process. However, without adequate communication skills, planners cannot meet their responsibilities to understand community expectations. Kaufman (1999) pointed out that the root cause of inadequate communication skills and lack of understanding community values was due to the lack of adequate planning education in Australia, which meant that social and community values could not be incorporated into the planning decisions. She also observed that planning education in Australia did not give planners sociological insights; this prevented them adequately understanding community values and communicating

them effectively. In Australia, a planning degree requires five years that include 30 units of which only one sociology unit is required. So planners often misunderstand community values and social preferences. This view was reflected in comments made by the ACT's senior urban planner, Tony Powell: that PALM lacks the planning expertise to capture community input and to incorporate it in planning decisions, and that PALM's Executive Director was not a planner, experienced planners were no longer involved with PALM, and PALM was run by planners who were not adequately trained to address community preferences in a broader context. Tony Powell believes that for these reasons, planners give more importance to economic development and to the current demands of the market, but long-term sustainability issues have been virtually ignored and are not adequately incorporated into planning decisions. He presumes that Canberra's planning direction is going back to 1970s planning principles, which gave priority to economic development in planning decisions.

Therefore, there may be a need for deeper institutionalized reform (Kaufman, 1999). This view was acknowledged by the experienced planners and academics who attended a national forum organized by the Urban Research Program at the Australian National University in June 1998 (Gleeson and Low, 2000), which discussed various reform agendas for the Australian planning system. The aim of this forum was to address current Australian urban planning, seen as in a 'state of crisis', and the lack of public participation in planning matters.

Similarly, a current member of the newly formed the ACT Planning and Land Council (an expert advisory committee on planning and development matters), Brendan Gleeson and a planning academic Nicholas Low state that Australia's planning education lacks a proper planning course to train its students to conduct effective public participation programs and to communicate with the planning community (Gleeson and Low, 2000). They proposed that public participation courses should be introduced at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Gleeson and Low, 2000: 232). Self (1998) perceives the present planning direction as 'Market-driven' and playing down community values in planning decisions; commenting that the contribution of professional planners is downgraded and planning decisions are increasingly made on the basis of developers' pressure or political opportunism rather than professional analysis. This appears to be the case in the ACT's consultation process. Tony Powell commented that the ACT had

started de-skilling planners in planning decisions, and that when the ACT became self-governing, planners began leaving it: re-skilling is needed to address planning and development matters.

### **7.2.3 Lack of Adequate Competence Understanding about the Process**

Some business representatives raise questions about the competence of LAPAC members and their understanding of the planning process. The interviews with business and Ministerial appointees indicate that they are critical of the resident and community representatives: they believe that residents have no adequate understanding of planning and cannot articulate their concerns effectively before the development proponents; all they have is emotional attachment to their home areas. Their comments on development applications are not rational arguments worth considering, and do not present relevant facts or justify due attention. In response to this opinion posed by the business representatives and Ministerial appointees, a resident member on the committee commented:

LAPAC members could not be seen as experts, but as ‘non-professional planning experts’ ... involved in the consultation process for a long time and well aware of its process. We do not have to be professionals to be included on planning committees. We are part of the community only.

When this respondent was asked to respond to comments such as ‘Most of the LAPACs members have no competence level of planning understanding’ and ‘Some cannot point to the north point of a map’, he replied:

Our job is not to be expert in reading plans and maps. The committee’s concern is to understand the impacts [of development applications] on their localities, and LAPAC is not a technical advisory committee, it is a planning advisory committee ... consisting of people with or without planning understanding. What we need to know is the planning guidelines and decision process.

#### 7.2.4 Lack of Social Planners

The absence of social planners in the planning authority is intensely felt by the members, and it is known that social planners are needed in conducting consultation process through a planning advisory committee. Currently, the planning authority is dominated by planners with a background in architecture and landscape architecture. There are no social planners for any statutory consultation processes, and some long-time committee members feel that their absence prevents from capturing the community's social values and feelings of attachment to the places where they live. A resident member cited a proposed development application known as DV-200, (also known as 'Garden City Variation) which will significantly change the character of Canberra and will lift some existing restrictions on residential and commercial development in the inner city suburbs. Resident and community representatives on LAPAC comment that the value and recognition of the national capital appear to be of little importance to the planning authority and development proponents when they propose to change many characteristics of the 'Garden City'. LAPAC members feel that residents and community views on the proposed DV-200 have not been taken into account because no importance has been given to social and environmental values. There are no social planners to encapsulate the social realms and 'sense of place' of the residents; neither planning agency nor the developers give importance to the social implications of development applications. They comply with planning and design guidelines only and do not adequately explain and discuss the possible impact of development on LAPAC neighbourhoods. A member of the wider public, who regularly attends the LAPAC meeting commented:

Neither PALM nor developers have social planners. All they have are some architects who cannot, I believe, carry out community consultation effectively that would reflect community values, and the social fabric.

Another pointed out that the community could not influence the planning decisions as they were not given adequate time to make comments and recommendations: only three weeks in the case of 'DV-200'. LAPACs felt that the allocation of time for commenting on 'DV-200' was not adequate for them nor for the wider public. Other members on the committee noted that LAPACs lacked any significant influence on planning decisions; Tony Powell commented:

People or any consultation body in ACT have no real influence on the planning decisions. LAPAC as a consultation body was working well and raising concerns that were best suitable for their own localities, but it could not effectively influence to the better planning outcomes that were suitable, and based on regional goals to foster Canberra as a liveable city.

Powell added that planning decisions were based on a political agenda that was reflected in the activities of the outgoing government. The agenda of the last Government was to sell land and to develop or to redevelop wherever the developers wanted, and PALM acted to serve political decisions only, because PALM lacked skilled planners that could foster the social values of the community and enhance the importance of Canberra as the nation's capital. In effect, LAPAC and other planning organizations were only influential in delaying the approval process; however, at the end developers would win, even though they might agree to some minor things to their development applications.

Powell suggested that the consultation committee should have competence enough to put forward the views, which were believed to be acceptable to the greater community and to the planning authority for consideration; in order to achieve this goal, all consultation committees should include academics, community leaders and non-professional planning experts, but he was sceptical of the likelihood of adequate budget and secretarial support for the committees to collect community input on development applications.

#### **7.2.5 Lack of Amicable Relationship**

Overall the LAPAC consultation process indicates poor relationships among the planning policy community and distrust among them. Knaap et al., (1998) point out that consensus is a pre-condition for trust among the discourse participants, focusing on shared objectives. However, there is little sign of information being shared between business representatives on the one hand, and residents and community groups on the other. The researcher noticed that the relationship between business and community groups was always antagonistic, but there was a good and trustworthy relationship between residents and community groups because of a common vision on the development and redevelopment of their suburbs, and a strong commitment to protecting them from what was termed the 'greedy mentality' of development proponents, and a common shared love of the places where they have been living for a long time.

### *Conflicting views*

Conflicting views on development and redevelopment issues among LAPAC members, contributed to a loss of local character and identity. The business representatives, *de facto* representatives of developers, want more redevelopment and affordable housing units around the inner city. They said that there was a high demand for affordable housing, particularly single units, in those areas, for middle-class single employees working in and around the city areas. But residents and community groups wanted to preserve the character of the garden city in their suburbs: to restrict multi-unit developments and prevent permission for dual occupancy on big blocks. These conflicting opinions on urban renewal among residents and business representatives may lead to many changes in the urban character. The resident members believe that business representatives are always found on the Government side to support development applications. A resident member commented:

Business representatives on the LAPAC are government agent to approve DA, without much obstruction.

The most obvious conflict among the LAPAC members was observed in the Manuka and Inner North LAPACs, each of which appeared to be divided into two main groups: the residents and community groups on one side, and business and Ministerial appointees on the other side, a perspective of *us and them*. A resident representative on LAPAC commented:

Business representatives want to bulldoze all the trees, and one or two-storey buildings and put ten-storey buildings in Northbourne Avenue, which is ridiculous development in the gateway to the national capital.

There is conflict over the allocation of local open space for development work. The community feels that local open space will be gradually taken up by putting units around the open space, the rest of which will be taken up subsequently near the units currently proposed for development applications. This is exemplified by a proposed multi-unit development along the Barry Drive in Turner. The community feel that this development would jeopardize open space for the residents living in the neighbourhood and remove

pedestrian access for the commuters going to the CSIRO and the ANU, but they have not been successful in keeping this area as open space. The flexibility of the Territory Plan allows developers to vary the existing Territory Plan to accommodate various land uses. The resident member commented:

Decisions have already been taken for development of this park. Where is the consultation? Here consultation means to make comments on decided proposals. When necessary they [planning authority] will make a little change to prove that community concerns are being taken into account. It is like window dressing. It is neither participation, nor consultation, it is just tokenism.

However, business representatives have different views. They believe that responses from the community are normally given high importance by the developers as well as the planning authority. They believe that Canberrans are 'over-consulted'. In every planning initiative, PALM conducts consultations with both statutory and non-statutory groups. A business representative said that people should be happy as they were being informed about what would happen in future; they had adequate opportunity to raise their concerns during the meetings and later could send a submission detailing their concerns on proposals, which would eventually help PALM to make a balanced planning decision. A Ministerial appointee commented that most of the community and residents views on development applications are based on the 'NIMBY' (Not in my backyard) syndrome:

They [LAPAC resident and community groups] don't want some units around them. Other income groups have the right to live near their work places. As a developer [here as a business representative in LAPAC], we are meeting housing demands. We are not putting bricks; we are concerned about high quality sustainable development as well.

Similarly, the Kingston Foreshore Development Authority, in its first phase of work, will provide 1865 dwellings just behind Wentworth Avenue in Kingston. The concern of the community is the 'scatter-gun' approach to planning where developers initiate development proposals, which sometimes need variation to the Territory Plan. Ultimately, continuous variations to the Territory Plan, the community believes, will destroy the



natural environment of Lake Burley Griffin. Resident and community groups are also critical that the role of National Capital Authority is not effective in introducing development control plans, which the community believes need to be stronger to preserve the elements of the National Capital and Federal Parliament. Within one kilometre of the parliamentary triangle this type of multi-unit development will gradually encroach fringe areas around Parliament House.

Kingston is actually under the Manuka LAPAC. The residents and community representatives believe that most of the business representatives on this LAPAC have business relations with the Kingston Foreshore Development Authority, and always support to what the KFDA proposes to do. A resident member said:

Business representatives are here as if they wanted to see that all development applications from the Foreshore Authority are approved, which will probably give them some extra business. The community need is nothing to them.

These differences of expectation and conflicting views of the role of the committee in the consultation process may give a relative autonomy to the planning authority to implement their own planning options and undermine community preferences. Webler (1995) commented that any fragmentation among the discourse participants gives relative advantages to the decision-makers, which often undermine overall community concerns and their preferences for development.

#### **7.2.6 Lack of Opportunity for Early Involvement**

The lack of opportunity to participate at the early stage of development applications to make informal comments means that often members do not fully understand the extent of a proposed development application and what it affects, until development work has commenced. Many LAPAC members, particularly in the Inner North and Manuka, have identified the lack of early involvement as a major problem of development applications. They believe that DAs are put on the LAPAC agenda after many things have already been done, including formal and informal consultations with PALM and other planning sections. Residents and the community are often not consulted before lodgement of formal applications with PALM. A Manuka LAPAC member commented:

Before putting a formal DA with PALM they [developers] start bulldozing trees prior to consulting LAPAC and the communities, as if their DA would be approved anyway.

Another LAPAC member agreed. He is also critical of the huge redevelopment along Northbourne Avenue and multi-unit development in big blocks in O'Connor, adjacent to Northbourne Avenue. He believes that developers can hide many things when they start construction:

They [developers] can easily hide by putting a wall on the construction side. They demolish trees when they feel necessary. Nobody can realize what is happening inside. If you ask why did they demolish the trees, the reply was to plant ornamental woods in a suitable position.

#### **7.2.7 Lack of Adequate Time to Review Development Applications**

There is a widespread complaint that LAPAC members are not given adequate time to review development applications. They feel that some development applications have national interests and need greater consultations before final decisions are made. However, the general feeling is that people must ask PALM in almost every development application for a greater extension of time. This would allow the wider community and other interested individuals and group, time for an informed submission. This occurred with the current DV 200 proposal. The time allowed for individual and group submissions was until 31 August 2002; all the concerned LAPACs had to request PALM to extend the submission time until 20 September 2002.

In this regard, most of the LAPAC members identified two important reasons why LAPACs are not given importance in the consultation process. First, PALM and the development proponents do not whole-heartedly feel that community input is important in planning decisions. Second, they do not give real value to Canberra as the nation's capital, which has a unique character to be preserved; consequently, they also fail to value Canberra's international reputation as a planned city. A LAPAC member commented:

If you believe in the Garden City, Planned City, and Bush Capital concept, you must preserve its uniqueness. But politicians are devaluating its international

image. And proponents [of development] want to make money devaluing its national significance.

### 7.2.8 Lack of Proper Representation

There is a problem with representation on the advisory committee. The current committee consists of residents, community groups, business people, and Ministerial appointees. The residents and community groups are dissatisfied with the business representation on every LAPAC. But the pressing concern is: who will be on the committee? How can it ensure greater representation from all kinds of people? How can it get the whole community's input in the consultation? So choosing the membership for the advisory committee is a critical issue. Also it seems that only known activists and community and political leaders are normally chosen to serve on the committee, in the hope that their recommendations and advice will be respected by the wider community. However, the community interest may be spread and not well organized, and therefore, not adequately represented on the committee, so the whole process may be disrupted by challenging the legitimacy of the committee (Webler and Tuler, 2000). The LAPAC representation is no exception to that the wider community raised this fundamental question about representation, which they termed a 'small segment of hand-picked elites'; so LAPAC members believe that they do not have adequate opportunity to collect community input and to convey it to the planning agency for consideration.

The *election and selection process* for LAPAC membership has been criticized by both the wider community and LAPAC members. They say that the election process is fair, but the concern is: who is going to be elected finally? Some members said inadequate profiles of LAPAC activities do not encourage the wider community to be part of the consultation process. There is also criticism of the LAPAC protocol because there are only residents, community groups, business groups and Ministerial appointees on the committee; other representatives of the community—schools, churches, sport, police, housing, property management, youth, and disabled people—are not represented.

There is also concern about outsiders on the committee. Members who are neither residents nor in business in the LAPAC areas may not clearly understand the needs of residents and the community. Webler (1995: 39) commented:

... membership of the advisory committee is typically chosen from among the leaders of the community. They belong to the same class of elites as the government officials, experts, and stakeholders. They are more likely to rely on instrumental understanding of the problem and downplay the value of anecdotal evidence and competing normative arguments.

Therefore, advisory committees should be formed in way that maintains a balance of representation and people who have genuine interest in the area and its planning outcomes; a balanced membership is essential to establish trust and reduce conflict. Some members of the committee feel that LAPAC itself contains no specific guidelines regarding its balance: residents, community leaders and some selected Ministerial appointees do not represent the whole community. The planning authority is responsible for interpreting what constitutes balanced representation. Long and Beierle (1999) note that the criteria for balanced membership in advisory committees may vary according to the subject matter of a group. Since LAPAC discusses planning and development matters, ranging from the hydrological aspects to the social implications of development applications, some members feel there should be some technical people on the committee to qualify the comments on very technical aspects of the proposals. According to Long and Beierle (1999: 11):

Thus, where the issues are broad and policy-oriented, advisory committees should also be broadly representative, along technical, social and political dimensions.

A planning staff member of PALM commented on representation on LAPAC:

LAPAC does not truly represent the community, as it has only members of retired persons, community leaders, long-time residents and business people. It has no wider community representation on the committee such as youth organizations, church leaders, single mothers, and disabled people.

Most of the planners also acknowledge that residents, community groups and business interests alone do not truly represent the whole community on the committee, but say there is other representation as necessary. Developers have no representation on the

committee, but business representative work on their behalf, as most of the business representatives on LAPACs are developers. The LAPAC protocol should clearly define the business people and developers on the committee. Since developers play a very important role in the meeting, presenting applications for development, they often insist to LAPAC members that as the applications comply with the guidelines, therefore, they should be approved, thus, reducing the opportunity for LAPAC members to express necessary concerns about them. A Manuka LAPAC member said:

Often we have been threatened by the developers that they comply with the Territory Plan, and we have to accept it, because the Territory Plan allow them to do it. There is no other avenue to find alternatives, as developers believe that they comply with planning rules and regulations and also comply with DRP guidelines. We feel disenfranchised.

#### **7.2.9 Inadequate and Limited Role**

Even though some long-time resident members want to have a combination of professional, and non-professional planning experts on the committee, overall LAPAC is neither an 'Expert Advisory Committee' nor a 'Policy-level Advisory Committee'. PALM acknowledges that LAPAC is simply a 'Tasks Specific Advisory Committee', representing diverse community interests and providing a public forum for members of the community to attend and discuss their needs and concerns about the decision-making process. LAPACs make comments only on development applications. They were formed only for this purpose and not to make comments at the level of strategies. It appears that LAPAC's function is to comment on development applications, which have been submitted by the developers with or without prior consultation with LAPAC and other community and residents associations. However, Design Review Panel (DRP) appears to be an expert advisory committee, consisting of planners and academics, whose comments, LAPAC members believe, are given high priority.

DRP discusses planning and design matters; this panel has generated distrust and disillusionment among LAPAC members as it also reviews all development applications in order to examine whether they comply with Territory Plan and design guidelines. It seems that LAPAC and DRP may have competitive roles in the consultation process. Observation reveals that it is worthwhile to avoid parallel bodies discussing the same

issue: their introduction may generate greater distrust among other key planning stakeholders and thus increase conflict and cynicism.

The researcher interviewed two DRP members who were also Technical Officers. They said that DRP was not a parallel organization, but provided planning and design guidelines to the development proponents for achieving high-quality sustainable development. But LAPAC members interviewed have the impression that DRP was purposely created to undermine LAPAC suggestions and to rely on expert opinion. The wider community believes that this type of parallel organization can have more influence on planning decisions than community orientated statutory bodies. A LAPAC member commented:

We are a task-oriented group. If they [PALM] feel our comments have value then they will give them importance, otherwise, they will ignore them.

He added:

Why are we a group, since we have been encouraged for only individual submissions, not a body to submit any concerns collectively? It is carefully designed not to be very effective in planning decisions in order to ensure that the planning professionals and proponents can implement their own pet hobby-horse ideas.

### **7.3 BARRIERS TO FAIR AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION**

The evaluation of LAPAC's role has revealed two important aspects of the barriers for a fair and effective participation: first, differences in understanding over the role of LAPAC in planning and development matters, and second, value-driven expectations by the committee members about the planning outcomes.

The LAPAC protocol outlines a very specific role for the committee: to advise the planning authority on planning and development matters referred to them. However, not all planning and development matters are included on the committee's agenda; as discussed earlier some planning issues are excluded, such as dual and triple occupancy in

a big block, transport planning, land sales, land release, areas under commonwealth control, park and open-space development and management. The excluding of some planning issues from the committee may discourage members from playing effective an role in overall planning issues. According to Renn et al., (1995), public participation process is unfair if participants are not able to discuss all related issues during the meeting. The explanations for excluding these planning matters in the LAPAC consultation process are also not acceptable to the members, who believe that government has come to a wrong conclusion that the committee is overwhelmed with DAs. This is not a justifiable explanation.

LAPAC's primary role is to act in an advisory capacity, but interview data indicate some disagreements on whether LAPAC should be simply advisory, or as a planning watchdog. These differences in understanding the role of the committee may result in conflict and arguments during the meeting. The LAPAC members acknowledge that sometimes LAPACs have difficulty in putting forward their recommendations collectively or initiating their own activities jointly when there are discussions about the clarification of their role in planning decisions. Resident members felt that LAPAC should be a planning watchdog to convey their needs and expected planning outcomes to the planning authority, but some business and Ministerial appointees believe that LAPAC should remain only advisory.

These different views have also been reflected in PALM's planners, who hold very different views about the role of LAPAC. It is felt that planners see LAPAC as part of their consultation obligation to facilitate decision-making. LAPAC is a group to which planning staff can give information and planning documents for comment, not for generating new planning and design ideas. LAPAC should be a planning advisory committee to obtain comments and feedback on development applications on behalf of the community. The Planning authority will value their advice and opinions in the planning processes, but not necessarily give them the highest priority. LAPAC should remain a public forum for residents, community activists and business people, not a forum for policy planning, which should remain with the government and its planning authority. The planning Minister said that the current government is community-oriented and would give value to community voices; however, he felt that decision-making power should remain with the Legislative Assembly. Decisions would not go beyond the

community's feelings and the input of the population would be given high priority in the final decision-making.

PALM seems to expect LAPAC to act as a means of public participation, where development proponents, the wider public and enthusiastic planning groups can bring planning and development concerns for the discussion; once development applications are tabled, the committee may make recommendations regarding their preferred options. But these recommendations do not receive any response or feedback except for acknowledgement of them. In this way, the PALM and the planners are able to filter LAPAC concerns, and apply their own judgment on development applications.

But, the views of the wider public are also pertinent to the consultation process. Members of the wider public perceive LAPAC's role as a source of information, or fact-finding body for the planning authority. They believe that the role of LAPAC is limited if it can only act in an advisory capacity to PALM and the Minister for Planning. They believe that LAPAC provides a platform for the wider community that might not otherwise exist, they can write letters or appear at LAPAC meetings as a way of introducing their concerns.

These differences in perception of the role of LAPAC indicate some serious barriers to the fair and effective operation of the LAPAC consultation process. Community groups believe LAPAC should be a watchdog; where business people, Ministerial appointees, and planners believe it should merely report community concerns. The wider public believe LAPAC is a form of public consultation. It seems that planners and PALM use LAPAC to review public concerns on planning issues, while the wider public use LAPAC as a good avenue to formally register community concerns to possibly affect the planning decisions. It is evident there are different perceptions of the role of LAPAC and conflicting expectations about the planning outcomes. So it seems LAPAC is not successful in fulfilling its role.

### **7.3.1 Feedback and Responsiveness**

Timely feedback and response to the members greatly influence the perception of members that their input and recommendations have been taken into account in making the final decisions, but LAPAC members complain the lack of such responses. Planners



often do not provide feedback, sometimes, one planner replaced by another at the next meetings; the substitute does not know what happened last month and cannot provide feedback to the committee.

Committee members were often told that their questions had been forwarded to the relevant section within PALM or the ACT Government, and were resentful when they did not receive a reply. This lack of feedback and accountability to the community may lead to the assumption that community concerns are not given importance or taken into consideration, which causes some long-time members to have little enthusiasm for remaining on the committee. Most of the former members who had resigned complained about inadequate feedback to their concerns about whether or not they were heard.

### 7.3.2 Influence and Power of Decision-Making

The power of decision-making in planning and development matters rests mainly in the ACT Government and its planning authority, but the main political decisions are in the hands of the Minister for Planning, who has call-in powers to undertake final decisions. This is shown by the recent decision taken by the ACT Government on selecting an extension route for Gungahlin Drive. The previous Government proposed to base Gungahlin Drive on the Eastern Alignment, so, all the planning staff were engaged in rationalizing the Eastern Alignment of Gungahlin Drive Extension; however, the new Labor Government changed the option of the previous government. Now the Western Alignment is preferred and the planning authority is justifying this option as better for the people of Canberra. A LAPAC member commented:

Sometimes, I feel it's useless to talk with Technical Officers when I feel they have no power; power probably lies in the hands of the Minister and of course the Minister is in the pocket of the developers.

However, PALM sometimes makes its own decisions without prior consultation with the Minister, in regard to non-master-planned development applications, which only require a very small change in existing land use. But when the development applications, need greater public involvement and create disagreement, the Minister uses his call-in power to make the final decision. A LAPAC member commented:

We don't know why the Minister uses the call-in power. There is nothing written on the Minister's call in power, on what grounds the Minister uses it. Only the LAPAC protocol indicates that the Minister has call-in power. But there should be a written statement on what grounds the Minister uses it. There is no document and written statement detailing call-in power. It is like a communist state only with gentle behaviour.

There seems to be 'top-down' approach to planning-decision practices in the ACT. This approach is mostly consultative and dominated by the comments of the planning professionals of planning authority and the developers. Most LAPAC members feel they are always given opportunities to raise their concerns over development activities, but they also feel that planning professionals have the most influence on decisions, if there are no political or election commitments by the Minister. The planners who are currently examining the proposed Neighbourhood Planning Groups have commented that the present consultation approach is 'top-down' and they are trying to bring a 'bottom-up' level to give more voices to the community and residents in planning decisions. A planner added:

Those who live, play, work and invest in their areas have to be the main planning partners in neighbourhoods. The current process gives little opportunity to the community and residents to have their say incorporated significantly into the planning decisions. The neighbourhood plan is working to bring the community and residents to be equal partners for planning decisions.

However, the PALM is considered to be very close to the community, but it has very little power in decision-making, particularly where a political decision or approval at government level is required. In a broader sense planning goals are sometimes tied to political and economic concerns: examples are the Kingston Foreshore Development and multi-unit housing development along Northbourne Avenue. The planning authority has nothing to do with the inner-city housing development close to the Lake Burley Griffin, but gives only professional advice and support to the whole process. Most of the LAPAC members expressed concern that these are political decisions and this process has been initiated by the development proponents with PALM's planning staff as a partner. Similarly, the proposed ACT Jail in Symonston has generated huge objections from the

residents and community groups, particularly in the nearby suburbs of Narrabundah, Griffith, Forrest and Red Hill. Their concern is that its close proximity to suburban areas would have a great major impact on the locality and its landscape. This view has been acknowledged by planning professionals in PALM, but they commented that it is a political decision to select the right place to construct a jail for the ACT. A developer expressed different views:

Relatives of prisoners have the right to see prisoners within close proximity of their residence. They [prisoners] are not boat people to be sent to Woomera detention centre [a detention centre for illegal migrants]. The ACT Jail is long overdue and it is necessary, but the question is that everyone will say 'not in my backyard'.

### 7.3.3 Consultations with known Stakeholders

LAPAC members feel that the community is consulted mostly on already decided development activities. The comments of community groups and long-time residents on LAPACs, suggest that the consultation process is based on what Webler (1992) termed the '*decide-announce-defend*' approach: the planning authority first *decides* with the development proponents what to do and later they *announce* plans in the form of either development applications or Master Plans among the planning stakeholders. In the name of consultation the planning authority simply *defends* what they have decided to do. The statutory consultation with LAPACs and other planning stakeholders provides an opportunity for community input that is often limited by inadequate provision of information to LAPAC members on development proposals, not giving adequate response to individual members or LAPAC as a whole, a limited time in which to respond, and lack of formal feedback to the LAPACs indicating whether their comments are being considered into the planning decisions.

Since 1995 PALM has attempted to involve community-based planning organizations such as PACTT, Save the Ridge, Community Councils (North and South) and Friends of Aranda in the consultation process. However, most of the development applications are lodged with PALM before the planning stakeholders are timely consulted. Residents and community members on LAPAC say that PALM normally consults planning stakeholders

on development applications, but most of the time the applications are submitted before the consultation process starts. A member commented:

We see a DA when it has already started working, we have been given so many options, but they don't invite us to create options, instead they give us options to choose. As if the initial process for generating options is the sole responsibility of the planners. We are given no chance to make our own options, but to accept their options, which they designed with prior consultation with the concerned [development] proponents.

Accordingly, PALM conducts non-statutory consultation events with many groups such as high school students, community groups, residents associations and possibly affected communities and individuals. Consultation by PALM on the Jamison Group Centre Master Plan was with Canberra High School students and caregivers at the Aranda Nursing Home, as the school and nursing home are close to the Jamison Centre. Most of the LAPAC members commented that such processes were just whitewashing to reduce conflict and persuade the public into feeling that they had a voice in planning decisions; but a planning staff member commented that this move might be used as a model for further consultation with various groups such as youth organization, single mothers, nursing home staff, social clubs residents groups, religious leaders, ACT Housing, the Defence Housing Authority, and environmental groups, regarding major development or redevelopment work in their areas.

#### **7.3.4 Barriers to Fair and Effective Participation in Planning Advisory Committees**

The planning stakeholders identified the following examples of barriers to fairness and effectiveness in the consultation process; observations by the researcher and other planning documents are also included in the lists of barriers. From the identification of barriers to participation in the planning advisory committee discussed in Table 7.1, it appears that LAPACs do not adequately provide effective planning input for strategic planning initiatives. This is not only due to different expectations of planning outcomes among the planning policy community, but also an indication of problems in the planning authority. Planning policy-making is an interactive process and requires collaboration among all in the planning policy community to ensure a fair and effective consultation process. The planning policy community should feel that the process is carried out fairly

**Table 7.1: Barriers to fair and effective participation in planning advisory committees**

Barriers to fair participation	Barriers to effective participation
<p><i>Adequate opportunity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate time to review DAs</li> <li>Inadequate time to lodge submissions</li> <li>Inadequate access to planning documents</li> <li>Inadequate explanation in documents</li> <li>Lack of adequate preparation on DAs</li> <li>Lack of opportunity to lodge complaints with AAT</li> </ul> <p><i>Early involvement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of early involvement in the process</li> <li>Too late to receive planning information</li> <li>Not involved in initial planning stage</li> </ul> <p><i>Representation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of wider range of representation</li> <li>Lack of knowledgeable individuals</li> <li>Inappropriate selection criteria</li> <li>Inadequate profile of committee</li> <li>Excessive use of call-in power to nominate members on the committee</li> </ul> <p><i>Agenda and minutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevailing hidden agenda</li> <li>Exclusion of planning issues from the committee agenda</li> <li>Lack of accurate minute taking</li> <li>Committee advice often does not reach to the Minister</li> <li>Planners can filter committee advice in minutes</li> </ul> <p><i>Feedback and responsiveness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of accountability of the planning authority</li> <li>Inadequate explanation in feedback</li> <li>Lack of provision to give feedback in protocol</li> <li>Inadequate feedback from development proponents</li> <li>Long time to respond to committee concerns by the planning authority</li> <li>Receive feedback that was not suggested</li> <li>Members do not know where the input has gone</li> </ul>	<p><i>Defined role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited role on planning matters</li> <li>Only comments on DAs</li> </ul> <p><i>Promote learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of willingness to learn</li> <li>Lack of language accessible documents</li> <li>Lack of ability to understand needs</li> <li>Lack of planning understanding</li> <li>Lack of ability to challenge</li> <li>Not updated with current planning laws</li> <li>Inability to articulate planning matters</li> <li>Inability to capture social values</li> </ul> <p><i>Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of effective communication among planning community</li> <li>Lack of effective communication between DA presenters and members</li> <li>Absence of information technology for communication</li> <li>Lack of interpersonal communication to share planning information</li> <li>Lack of effective communication between planners and committee members</li> </ul> <p><i>Relationships and trust</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adversarial relation between residents and business representatives</li> <li>Hiding from each other</li> <li>Lack of consideration and compassion</li> <li>Lack of trust among planning policy community</li> <li>Lack of tolerance to accept other people's assertions on planning matters</li> <li>Prevailing opponent mentality</li> <li>Lack of willingness to establish friendly relations with planning community</li> </ul> <p><i>Objective-driven</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of available evaluation of existing process, if modification of practices is required</li> <li>Lack of evaluation of members' expectation</li> <li>Lack of evaluation to understand whether or not members' expectations have been met</li> </ul>

and effectively, and that committee members have adequate opportunity to influence planning decisions. However, major planning stakeholders believe that most of the planning decisions take place behind closed doors in consultation with development proponents. The residents believe that planning decisions are largely influenced by planning officers and based on their recommendations; the wider community has similar views about the effectiveness of LAPAC in the planning decisions. The analysis and discussion in chapters five and six indicated the barriers to fair and effective consultation through a planning advisory committee. The elements that need to be addressed for a fair and effective planning advisory committee are discussed in the concluding chapter.

#### **7.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Desired expectations about planning outcomes among all the planning policy community vary significantly and often conflicting. The research findings indicate that the residents and community groups are on one side and the business representatives and Ministerial appointees are on the other. The consultation occurs on urban changes, which may result in the loss of Garden City elements, local character and identity, with bad effects on long-time local residents. Therefore, residents and community groups have established NGOs outside the formal planning process to cope with such effects and raise planning concerns to be addressed by the planning authority.

LAPAC members expressed concerns for a fair and effective consultation process. They want a process, which is more transparent, open and accountable to the residents and community. Planners reviewing the proposed Neighbourhood Planning Group acknowledge that the consultation process in the ACT is inherited a traditional form of 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up' process needs to be promoted. However, the planning authority has not carried out any formal evaluation of the existing LAPAC process to put forward a new structure. Only the Australian Labor Party (ACT Branch) published a fact sheet (Australia Labor Party, 2001) in which it indicated that the LAPACs would be changed into Neighbourhood Planning Groups. Chapter Eight addresses issues that are essential to re-structure the current consultation process to develop a conceptual model for a Planning Advisory Committee that will work in a fair and effective way.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The public participation process is too complicated to come to the definitive conclusion on what constitutes a fair and effective process. This study begins to address this question through evaluating LAPAC's consultation processes based on the concepts of fairness and effectiveness. The qualitative analysis described in previous chapters and the analysis of findings described below lead to develop a conceptual model of the public participation process for the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC). This study also provides guiding criteria and question sets for evaluating fairness and effectiveness in planning advisory committee that may apply in a more general sense. However, this study has some limitations to develop a model, which require acknowledgment. The main problem was to find outgoing members of LAPAC for an in-depth interview; and new members were not in a position to make comments on the consultation process as they had just started their tenure with LAPAC. Some members had attended only one or two meetings and had not even become familiar with the consultation processes. It took a long time to get old members for an interview; some had moved to interstate. Business representatives were most reluctant to be interviewed, and the researcher had to explain the nature of this research and that he had no interests or connection with any individuals or organizations. Some planners also refused to give their time; some agreed to be interviewed together. Therefore, this research had to limit its sample size to planning professionals, wider public and experienced LAPAC members only.

### **8.1 A SUMMARY**

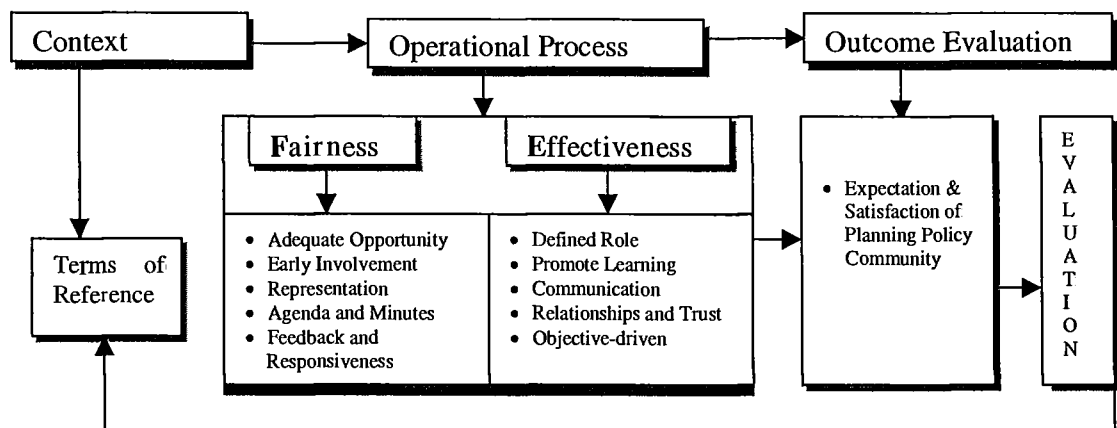
This concluding chapter summarises the findings of this study. The summaries rely heavily on the analysis of the research findings from the LAPAC case studies, which are mainly discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The analysis was based on criteria developed for studying planning advisory committees as a form of public participation; these criteria were mainly based on two meta-criteria, fairness and effectiveness in the participation process. This study adapted evaluative criteria from the relevant literature (Webler, 1992, 1995; Beierle, 1998; Ochteau, 1999; Chess, 2000; Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Webler and Tuler, 2000); however, focus was mainly on evaluating planning advisory committees as a method of public participation process. This study has examined criteria

that will be suitable and appropriate for analysing the planning advisory committee and its consultative process. The evaluation was carried out through attending meetings, interviewing the planning policy community, and analysing available documents on the LAPAC consultation process.

## 8.2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The goal of the conceptual model (Figure 8.1) is to produce a process that is fair and effective and to recommend evaluative criteria and question sets for the planning advisory committee. Chapter Seven discusses barriers to the consultation process and consequently the question arises how the planning authority would be able to introduce notions of fairness and effectiveness in participation process. A number of conceptual models have emerged in the literature on environmental decision-making to address such fairness and effectiveness, but there are few literature sources that evaluate criteria of fairness and effectiveness of public participation in urban planning, most particularly in cities where redevelopment pressure is very high. Since Canberra is known as a Bush Capital and wishes to maintain Garden City image, thus, any urban revitalization program needs to address ways of maintaining its image with greater input from the residents, community organizations and the development proponents. The Territory Plan and National Capital Plan have also advocated retention of the 'Bush Capital' and 'Garden City' image.

Figure 8.1: A conceptual model for planning advisory committees





The conceptual model has been proposed to achieve greater satisfaction of the wider public and committee members, as they are the recipients of planning decisions. The researcher does not expect to emerge with a perfect process but recommends a process that will achieve maximum performance of the criteria of fairness and effectiveness for planning advisory committees. Based on the available literature (Beierle, 1999; Dickinson, 1999; Gray and Wood, 1991; Smith, 1987, 1993; Innes and Booher, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Jankowski and Nyerges, 2001; Lauber and Knuth, 1998, 1999, 2000; Webler, 1995; Webler and Tuler, 2000) the proposed model presents two interrelated aspects: to produce a process that is fair and effective; and to develop guidelines for evaluating existing processes. The guidelines describe the criteria of fairness and effectiveness and related question sets for evaluating planning advisory committees. Some case specific recommendations for improving LAPAC consultation processes have also been proposed. The following sections provide a conceptual model that is fair and effective based on the research findings and literature. The recommendations are as follows.

- Develop a rational context with clear definition of pre-conditions for the planning advisory committee and its role into the planning decision (Gray and Wood, 1991; Smith, 1993; Dickinson, 1999).
- Formulate an accountable and well-articulated operational process that ensures greater procedural fairness and effectiveness in the public participation process with specific reference to planning advisory committees (Gray and Wood, 1991; Beierle, 1999; Dickinson, 1999; Jankowski and Nyerges, 2001).
- Organize a regular evaluation of satisfactions and expectations of committee members about the consultation process and reorganize the context and operational process (Smith, 1979; Syme and Sadler, 1994; Dickinson, 1999; Tuler and Webler, 1999).

Chapter Seven discussed barriers to fairness and effectiveness of public participation in planning advisory committees; this chapter discusses specific examples of such barriers and provides recommendations to address these in order to make a consultation process fair and effective.

### 8.2.1 Context and Process of Planning Advisory Committee

To design a fair and effective context of public participation program that is an integral part of a larger planning activity, a planning agency should initially address three major program elements: the terms of reference and its related activities; the public who might and should be on the committee; and the issues the committee would be dealing with. However, there are many other things that need to be defined clearly into the terms of reference and its related activities: how the committee is organized; how to identify major planning community to be involved; and how to formulate operational procedures of conducting committee meetings.

#### *The terms of reference*

The terms of reference for the committee must be tailored to meet the needs of neighbourhoods and other planning stakeholders, consistent with plans and guidelines. The role of advisory committees must also be addressed clearly in the terms of reference with statements of the committee's role and purpose. The role should not be so restricted as to prevent the committee from contributing effectively in planning decisions. A committee should be purpose-driven and everyone on the committee must understand the purposes for which committee is being set up and how it will achieve them. They should not feel ineffective in influencing the planning decisions. For example, Manuka and Inner North LAPAC members feel that their committees are largely ineffective in commenting on dual and triple occupancies. Owing to the restricted role indicated in the LAPAC protocol, described in Chapter Seven.

However, some planners believe that the committee's role should remain advisory and not be diverse or be involved in every stage of the planning process. The excessive load for the committees with many development applications may hinder them in achieving their main purpose of directions for their own neighbourhoods. Committees should be formed only to comment at the strategic level of planning and development matters instead of examining every development application regardless of its importance to the community. Thus, when formulating protocol, considerable time and effort must be spent in defining the committee's role, forms, functions, and purposes.

Determining the balance between a strategic and issue-specific role of the committee members is rather difficult until it is in the operational stage of the consultation process.

One way to address this issue is to arrange regular reviews of the committee's role by the planning agency to assess whether the committee is effectively playing its role. In order to do that the planning agency may form a review panel comprising people from all the planning policy community.<sup>1</sup> The function of the review panel would be to assess whether any amendments to the committee's role are required to improve it. The amendments could therefore be incorporated within the existing terms of reference.

### *Membership of the committee*

Membership of the committee is always a critical issue. When an advisory committee is decided on as the type of public consultation approved by the decision-makers, one of the first steps is to determine who should be on the committee. Webler (1992: 223) notes that 'if a balance is not achieved, or if over zealous supporters of interests are chosen then a large piece of the population may be shut out of the process'. Therefore, the balance of membership on the committee is always in question. In the proposed model of PAC, all planning stakeholders—residents, developers, the planning agency, non-governmental organizations, as well as enthusiastic individuals with significant interests in planning and development matters—should have formal membership on the committee.

To ensure a balanced membership on the committee, members must acquire confidence in the wider public. A planning advisory committee consisting of planning and design experts or only community and resident representatives cannot achieve confidence from the planning agency and linkage with the wider community. A more balanced membership that includes both planning professionals and non-professional planning experts would better serve the needs of the planning policy community, and consequently be more likely to operate as an effective public participation mechanism. This recommendation could be contradictory to achieving greater democratic representation on the committee; however, people in Canberra show little interests in regular participation, unless they are severely affected by development programs. In this situation, representatives of cross-sections of people such as community leaders, church leaders,

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in 2002, the ACT Minister for Planning formed the Planning and Development Forum with representatives from the community, and professional and industry bodies to work with PALM, now ACTPLA, to advise the Minister on how the planning process is made to liaise with ACTPLA on initiatives such the Canberra Spatial Plan (PALM, 2003b). Planning and Development Forum is additional to the Planning and Land Council, which is an expert-based advisory council to give strategic advice on planning matters to the ACTPLA and the Minister for Planning.

and other representatives of community-based organizations should be included on the committee to ensure greater representation and regular attendance at meetings.

This study recommends giving formal membership positions to planners on the committee as members, which may improve its effectiveness as a policy-input mechanism. The benefits are that it could improve communication by providing a direct link between the advisory committees and the planning authority. It would also improve credibility by giving the advisory committee a sense of authority and power. However, interview data indicate that residents and community groups do not support this recommendation; they only want a planning advisory committee with residents and community groups; however, they acknowledge the importance of planners attending the meetings regularly, not maintaining official routine work. Interviews with planners suggest that committees should consist of people from diverse backgrounds such as youth, single mothers, the disabled, parents' and citizens' committees, church leaders and community organizations.

Concern was also noticed about Ministerial appointees on advisory committee; most residents and community groups do not support excessive appointees by the Minister for Planning. Interviews with LAPAC members indicate that appointees are mostly developers, real estate personnel and representatives from big business organizations. The Minister never nominates a member from the community or from the residents' groups. Thus, a balance of Ministerial appointees would probably ease distrust among other members; even though most of them oppose Ministerial appointees because of their backgrounds, appointments by the Minister or planning agency from a cross section of the residents and community organizations would make it balanced in its representation.

### ***Balance and inclusiveness***

Advisory committees consist of people with diverse backgrounds including residents, the community, businessmen, technical experts and planning professionals. Identifying important stakeholders and ensuring their regular presence in the meetings is very important. A universal answer about which stakeholders to involve in management is neither possible nor desirable because the choice of stakeholders should depend both on the purpose of involvement and contextual factors (Chase et al., 2000: 212). On the other hand, the existing members on the committee may raise the justifications of other

representatives on the committee. This has been reflected in LAPAC membership: residents and community groups have strongly indicated that the number of business representatives and Ministerial appointees should be limited on every committee. Appointees have created distrust among other members on evaluating development applications for the approval: most appointees support development applications that propose more multi-unit development close to the central business district, but residents and community groups take the opposite view. The conflicting interests of representatives often generate distrust among the committee members: business representatives and development proponents indicate that the number of community activists and environmental lobbyists should be limited, since they believe that those groups have an anti-development attitude which hinders the appropriate development for urban renewal projects. Apart from recognizing such conflicting attitudes to representation on the committee, it is also important to ensure the involvement of underrepresented groups.

To ensure greater balance and inclusiveness, some guidelines are suggested for selection of the planning advisory committee: involve stakeholders with a broad range of attitudes; involve stakeholders with difference types of input to offer; involve traditionally underrepresented groups; and involve groups that have polarized views. In addition, special consideration should be given to the following selection issues:

- Select business representatives who have actually established businesses in the area of concern to a committee, not those who only have interests in business in the area.
- Select development proponents' representatives who have sufficient understanding of the area of concern, not those who come only to serve the interest of the proponents; and
- Select appointees who understand the area of concern and are acceptable to other members, not those who neither live nor have businesses in the area.

### ***Relationships among planning policy community***

An effective consultation process ideally depends on good relationships among members of the committee; distrust and hostility always hinder a consensus decision. As discussed earlier there were two groups on the committee: the resident and community groups on

the one hand, and the business representatives and Ministerial appointees on the other. The relationship between these two groups tends to be hostile and adversarial. Long-time members view that the consultation process is just to maintain planning obligations to consult planning policy community, and has never been used as a mechanism to gather community input for planning decisions. Disillusion leads to a relationship which some members term adversarial and confrontational; as a result both planning staff and LAPAC members are unwilling to co-operate for better planning outcomes.

The relationship between planning staff and the committee would benefit from more open and regular communication. This study suggests how to improve relationships in the planning advisory committee. If the committee and planning staff review the committee's objectives and issues of importance to the planners, both parties will be better informed of, and sensitive to, the concerns of others. To achieve better relationships in the policy community, the protocol should include provisions for regular consultation with planning staff outside the meetings. This meeting requirement would probably result in improved communication between committee and planning staff and enhance their relationships; this would in turn contribute to the effective operation of the consultation process.

The relationship between residents and development proponents is also important. Some committee members blamed the proponents for not providing timely planning documents and language accessible information. A planner member on LAPAC acknowledged that development proponents should employ people to prepare documents that laypeople on the committee can understand. This does not happen in LAPAC; instead some planners and developers are critical of the committee for inadequate understanding of planning and development matters.

### ***Agenda and minutes***

The agenda is essential for the decision-making process. Decisions are reached through evaluating and discussing all agenda items: development application and other issues put before the committee members for their comments. The agenda should indicate the amount of time to be spent on each item. Webler and Tuler (2000) observe that an agenda can restrict participation by not allocating enough time for participants to speak and raise their concerns, and that sometimes it can also impair the quality of discussion on an issue by scheduling time in such a way that participants cannot attend the meeting in time. In

planning advisory committees there are many reasons to give importance to agenda setting, because identifying the meeting agenda is almost the same as defining the planning problems. In traditional models of public participation such as public meetings, workshops, information nights and surveys, people have the chance to put their concerns into the meeting agenda or raise them during the discussion, but in planning advisory committees the meeting agenda is normally set by the planning agency either independently or in consultation with the committee chair. In many cases, however, the planning agency sets the agenda with the development proponents for the larger consultation processes, in which the advisory committee may be included. This practice normally leads to mistrust among others on the committee: in LAPAC consultations, members believe that the planning agenda is normally set by the development proponents in consultation with the planning staff, and the community has very little influence.

Some members of the LAPACs complain that the planning agency sets the agenda based on available development applications, and present these applications to the meetings, so the committee has nothing to contribute to the agenda. Special attention and consideration should be given to ensure that all planning issues are included for discussion; no planning issues should be officially excluded from the agenda. In addition all members should have the opportunity to voice their concerns at every meeting, sufficient time should be allowed for discussion. Members should not be given time at the end of the meeting when discussing other businesses; should declare if they have anything to add before the start of the formal meeting, ample time can be allocated for discussion.

The time allocated for discussing every item is very important. The LAPAC process does not have any guidelines to allocate time for the discussion of the meeting agenda. The LAPAC coordinator often makes an independent decision for allocating time, and rarely consults the convenor, but the coordinator may not know the importance of specific items and time requirement for discussion. There should be clear guidelines to allocate time for every agenda item in consultation with the committee chair and other experienced members.

Sometimes discussion on some items goes beyond the time limits. Once time has been allocated rationally, it should be maintained rigidly. This process will fairly distribute the time for discussion, and will also provide an equal chance for all participants. Special

encouragement should be given to the wider public to speak and to raise their concerns in planning meetings. Public speaking rights should be ensured significantly at any open planning meetings.

The minutes of the planning advisory committees have been subject to little detailed research. There has been discussion of the importance of minute taking, which translates into the committee's advice to the planning agency: the minutes should ensure that all concerns of the committee have been recorded accurately and succinctly, and should clearly state all the differences of opinion and expectations of the planning policy community discussed in planning meetings. A LAPAC member indicates that development proponents may give more importance to 'traffic, access to civic amenities, parking, affordable housing, and urban consolidations', while residents and community groups may give more attention to 'noise, smells, congestion, and the bad impact of urban consolidations'. The differing expectations of planning outcomes in the policy community will help the planning agency to structure the committee's preferences and future planning directions. Similarly, the views of the wider public should be structured in a way that reflects their opinions and firm expectations through the consultation process.

The LAPAC minutes normally record individual comments on development applications; members also show their disagreements on every issue and give opinions individually. On many occasions, consensus is reached, but does not emerge as a collective decision that can be put forward to the planning agency as community input. In this situation, the committee should reach a consensus with a majority of committee members that can make firm decisions on planning and development matters.

### ***Early involvement***

A major barrier to the participation process is the lack of easy and early access to the pertinent information. This issue is particularly important in relation to information, and notification of planning proposals and development applications. Interviews with LAPAC members also show that early notification of development applications is essential. The notification should appear in a community-accessible form using simple language whenever possible, and should have clear recognizable spatial information to avoid misunderstanding of explanations. The information should be made available to the affected members of the committee as a matter of course. Large images of development



sites should be displayed with clear information about the proposed development before formal applications are lodged. The meeting agenda and other important information should be published in local newspapers and posted on community notice boards, shopping complexes and community centres. It is important to make use of local media to publicize information of public interest, and the planning agency and committee should use the Internet, community bulletin boards and other forms of digital access. The planning agency should initiate processes to make information more accessible to the planning stakeholders.

### *Adequate opportunity*

This evaluative criterion encompasses many sub-criteria for members' opportunity for participation in the consultation process. These are:

- Equal access to information;
- Equal capacity to participate;
- Equal power to influence planning decisions;
- Equal opportunity to challenge the justification of planning proposals;
- Equal opportunity to challenge other member's claims;
- Access to information and knowledge;
- Access to planning documents;
- Adequate time allotment for reviewing development applications;
- Sufficient time for submission;
- Ample time for discussion; and
- Allocation of time for the wider public discuss issues at the meeting

All the LAPAC members interviewed commented on every criterion mentioned above, but did not all agree with them. Business representatives and often Ministerial appointees said that other members on the committee were given adequate opportunity in every aspect of the consultation process, but, they wanted more, which was not possible through this consultation process. But other members on the committee indicated that they were not given adequate opportunity. The most pressing concerns were the lack of available time and of language-accessible planning documents, thus committees should be given sufficient time to review development applications for an informed discussion in the

meetings. As some members may not have adequate understanding of planning and development matters, they should be provided with planning documents in accessible language, without planning jargons that might create confusion in understanding. This initiative will give them an opportunity to participate meaningfully in discussion and to debate the rationality of the proposed development applications. A committee member suggests that the planning agency and development proponents should employ social planners who can understand the community's social values and can use planning terms in such a way that laypeople on the committee may understand and learn more about the process of development approval. However, planners with an architecture background, along with other physical planners, dominate planning agencies in most cities in Australia (Kaufman, 1999); there are no social planners in senior positions in the ACT's planning authority. Planning education does little to introduce social values to the architects and planners; Gleeson and Low (2000) observe that Australian planning education seems not to be interested in introducing more coherent social, economic and environmental issues to be included in the planning curriculum. However, it seems that social and environmental planners must inevitably take part in producing planning documents for the community and other planning stakeholders.

#### ***Communication, feedback and responsiveness***

Communication and feedback between committee members and planning staff must be efficient and responsive. Once the committee receives a full and logical account of reasons why its recommendations and advice were accepted, modified, or rejected, it is better able to understand planning policy and priorities. Lack of such communication has caused much resentment. An improved situation is inevitable to make feedback and response more effective and consistent, so that there will be a sense of accountability in the committee, who will feel that they are being heard and able to influence the planning decisions.

#### ***The Internet and information technology***

Written letters and submissions may not be the most appropriate means of communication and the planning authority should determine how best to create more inclusiveness and accessibility in communicating with residents, community groups and development proponents. The options are to effectively use the Internet and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in the public participation process; these options are also supported by the

available information literature. LAPAC minutes indicate the need for better use of the Internet for timely communication with the policy community in general and committee members in particular (PALM, 2003c).

Current literature indicates that the use of GIS in the consultation process has value for visualizing information to the planning stakeholders; currently it is being applied to public participation process in neighbourhood planning (Ghose and Huxhold, 2001a). The application of GIS will be helpful to develop neighbourhood indicator lists, which are beneficial in communicating with planning stakeholders through visualization techniques. Public participation at the neighbourhood level can be severely affected without accurate and pertinent neighbourhood level data, and access to technology that enables easy and timely access to and analysis of such data (Barndt and Craig, 1994; Pickles, 1995; Barndt, 1998). Wide ranges of GIS-based initiatives have been undertaken by planning agencies for providing citizen groups with access to GIS (Barndt, 1998; Obermeyer 1998, Ghose and Huxhold, 2001a). In many countries, particularly the United States and the UK, neighbourhood based grassroots community organizations and citizen groups have shown enthusiasm for using GIS in order to address issues that concern them (Craig and Elwood, 1998; Elwood and Leitner, 1998; Elwood, 2000; Ghose and Huxhold, 2001b; Kellogg, 1999; Ramasubramanian, 1998).

The GIS practitioners and users assume that through the development and use of neighbourhood indicators in group decision-making, the changing, social, economic and physical planning of a neighbourhood can be shown (Ghose and Huxhold, 2001b; Jankowski and Nyerges, 2001). The 3D visualization techniques of GIS can be combined with neighbourhood indicators to assess quality of life to effectively plan the urban areas that have high development pressure. Talen (1998) introduced the concept of 'visualizing fairness' and 'equity mapping'. She was optimistic that such 'equity mapping' could be beneficial in analysing issues of neighbourhood planning and development matters and policy research:

... as a basis for plan making, revelations about who benefits, presented in visual, spatially-oriented terms, enables communities to evaluate their distributed preferences and to see whether or not they are in line with broader goals and with notions of fairness (Talen, 1998: 82).

However, there has been little research so far to develop Neighbourhood Information Systems (NIS) to assess the structure of civic life at the neighbourhood level. Interviews with Inner North LAPAC members during the Neighbourhood Planning Workshop on 9 April 2002 indicate that they feel the need of neighbourhood-based data for making informed comments. The current 'Suburb Snapshot' studies prepared by PALM to facilitate neighbourhood workshops seems to have failed to include the whole range of community information; it has only statistical indicators. Spatial analysis is needed; the Canberra Spatial Plan proposes to provide this along with thematic maps in the formulation of neighbourhood planning. A LAPAC convenor commented that community-based planning organizations such as PACTT and the proposed Neighbourhood Planning Groups should be given neighbourhood indicators, to monitor existing conditions and to develop long-term strategic plans for every neighbourhood.

GIS-based presentation of development applications would be effective in providing information. GIS is currently used for individual and group expression in participatory planning and its applications in local area planning looks promising (Talen, 1998, 1999, 2000). A LAPAC member commented that:

All the time developers visualize and display the maps on the current DA. Some are good and some are not. For instance, KFD displayed maps, which are very useful. They [developers] presented visual images of what would be happening in this suburb in future. The maps were easy to understand.

Jankowski and Nyerges (2001) used GIS in group settings, because 'groups are said to be the basic building blocks of society. Groups mediate interests and help give voice to social, health, environmental, economic, and safety concerns' (Jankowski and Nyerges, 2001:x). Planning advisory groups deals with geographical problems and is 'influenced by geography when they choose a store to shop, a route to drive, a path to jog, or a neighbourhood for a place to live' (Jankowski and Nyerges, 2001:1). GIS that are designed and used by groups with multiple perspectives are described as 'participatory geographic information systems' (Harris et al., 1995). On the other hand, Web-based GIS have been used for public participation (Kingston et al., 2000): the Web-based GIS enables local residents, community groups, and others involved in planing frame their

local issues and preferences through the Internet. It is proposed that web-based GIS facilities should be used for better planning understanding and effective communications between committee members and development proponents; this depend on the availability of Internet facilities in the city, and access to them by most of the planning policy community. In Canberra, where the Internet access rate at home and the office is one of the highest in the world (ABS, 1999), there is every chance of introducing web-based GIS for public participation. GIS applications would generally be applicable in cities, where the education rate is high and people have some understanding of information technology. To apply web-based GIS for public participation in planning advisory committees the study proposes the follow procedures:

1. Ensure that neighbourhood-based spatial information, and particularly development applications, are provided on the website either by the planning agency or by development proponents.
2. Identify the merits and demerits of development applications, provided they are on the website.
3. Identify whether DAs comply with planning laws and guidelines.
4. Make judgement and reshape development applications with comments and send them to relevant section in the planning agency.
5. Persuade development proponents to establish their own claims to validity during the committee meetings.

#### ***Promote learning and information session program***

Members of the expert advisory committees are more-or-less well informed on relevant issues and have high professional expertise in their own fields (Ashford, 1984); thus, they are designed to provide technical and high-level strategic advice on issues relevant to the agency's goals, such as nature of strategic plans, and identification of appropriate timelines for reviewing planning laws and design guidelines. Non-professional members and lay people are also included on many advisory committees as affected citizens to capture their input; the planning advisory committee is no exception. To keep all these committee members up-to-date with recent changes in laws, government executive orders and legislative amendments, a regular or session-specific outreach program would be beneficial. Planning advisory committee members would be informed of current changes

in planning laws, design guidelines, landuse zoning, and particularly political agendas that might affect planning and design matters.

An outreach program is also necessary to make participants competent enough to argue and establish claims to validity and assertions made on relevant matters (Ashford and Rest, 1999; Webler, 1995). Members must be well informed on planning laws and guidelines to articulate their concerns effectively and accurately: most LAPAC members have indicated this is not the case at present.

Planning staff also require adequate communication skills for effectively conducting a consultation. Planning staff have the necessary planning education, but often lack skill in communicating with the planning policy community. A LAPAC member observed that planners at PALM were good at explaining physical planning but failed to address social values, to put into planning practices. Kaufman's (1999) advocates introducing sociological theory into Australian planning education to enhance the planners' communication skills, understanding of the social values of the community living within a neighbourhood.

The lack of available neighbourhood profiles is another issue with LAPAC members: a basic introduction of a neighbourhood profile to the committee members in the outreach program will ensure informed and timely comment. At present LAPAC members are not given prior information on their neighbourhoods and lacking this, feel discouraged from participation. As mentioned, PALM has prepared six neighbourhood snapshots, which are a hopeful sign that neighbourhood indicators will be provided to unveil community needs and future directions. Long and Beierle (1999) commented that advisory groups should have two educational objectives: educating participants on the committee and educating the wider public outside the committee, coupled with discussion during the meeting. Most LAPAC members agreed that an educational program would be beneficial; however, a LAPAC is a relatively small organization and has no funding to receive community input. There should be a provision for this to ensure wider community participation in planning decisions. Long and Beierle (1999) point out that the advisory committee is a source not only of values, assumptions and preferences, but also of facts and generate alternatives. For example, in considering the proposed Jamison Group Centre Master Plan, the community in those neighbourhoods produced various new options for the Centre, the

original three options were changed and PALM accommodated the community option for the redevelopment of the Centre.

### **8.2.2 Organize Outcome Evaluation of the Participation Process**

One of the objectives of this study is to develop criteria for evaluating fairness and effectiveness of public participation process in planning advisory committee. The proposed criteria should satisfy most of the planning policy community and should be seen as a fair and legitimate way to incorporate community and individual values into planning decisions. Thus, the evaluation of the process is become important to have a set of criteria that can be applied widely across a variety of public participation techniques. This process allows to compare and to contrast between the techniques so that planning stakeholders know what result to expect from the use of any one technique. After rigorous evaluation of the LAPAC consultation process and PALM planning outcomes, this study provided two meta-criteria, ten evaluative criteria, twenty-six sub-criteria and sixty-six question sets (Tables 8.1 and 8.2) to evaluate public participation, particularly its procedural fairness and effectiveness in planning advisory committee. The proposed criteria and question sets reflect Webler's (1992, 1995) theory of fairness and competence, which applied in waste management programs (Webler, 1992, 1995), forest management programs (Webler and Tuler, 2000), and nuclear waste clean up programs (Webler, 1999), but this study developed criteria that were appropriate for evaluating planning advisory committee.

### **8.3 APPLICATIONS OF EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

The proposed evaluative criteria and question sets can apply to wide variety of citizens' advisory groups, but are probably most appropriate for planning and environmental advisory groups. Manifestations of the proposed model in specific contexts may require adjustments in context or order. Unlike statistical analysis, which can be proved or disproved with one exception, the proposed evaluation criteria and question sets must be treated with a degree of interpretation and flexibility, since they may not be appropriate to other types of planning and environmental advisory groups. However, all are believed to be consistent with the objective of achieving a fair and effective public participation process in planning advisory committees.

**Table 8.1: Evaluative criteria for planning advisory committees: fairness**

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**A. Guidelines for evaluating fairness criteria: adequate opportunity**

*A1. The Planning Advisory Committees (PAC) should have adequate opportunity to participate meaningfully.*

- Does the planning authority have the relevant planning information readily available at the committee's disposal (e.g. updated planning laws, rules, state of environment reports, design guidelines, spatial data and updated *Land Acts* that affect planning and development matters)?
- Is the PAC provided with language-accessible documents?

*A2. The PAC should have equal opportunity for access to information.*

- Is the PAC provided with detailed neighbourhood indicators before meetings?
- Do the planning authority or developers provide relevant information to the PAC before the meeting?
- Is the committee satisfied with the methods and techniques used for information dissemination?

*A3. The PAC should have equal power to influence planning decisions.*

- Do the PAC members feel that their recommendations have been taken into consideration?
- Do the PAC members feel that they are equal partners in planning decision?
- Does the PAC discourage excessive use of the authority's discretionary power to override PAC recommendations in taking the final decision?
- Is the PAC given any legal privileges to lodge complaints with an administrative appeal tribunal, if their recommendations are not given consideration in the planning decisions?

**B. Guidelines for evaluating fairness criteria: early involvement**

*B1. The PAC should have the opportunity to be involved in inter-departmental planning meetings.*

- Does the PAC have adequate opportunity to be involved early in the inter-departmental meetings before formal development applications are initiated?

*B2. The process should make opportunities for the PAC members to be involved during the conceptualization of the proposal.*

- Does the PAC have the opportunity to be involved during the conceptualization of development proposals?
- Does the PAC have the opportunity to put forward its ideas and concerns before the conceptualization the proposed development applications?
- Does the PAC have the opportunity to check whether the development applications comply with planning and design guidelines and committee recommendations?
- Does the process provide an opportunity to every one on the PAC to define and to determine the advantages and disadvantages of proposed development applications?
- Does the process allow the PAC to have access to other stakeholders' definitions and conceptualization of development applications?

**C. Guidelines for evaluating fairness criteria: representation**

*C1. The PAC should ensure greater representation from all the planning policy community.*



- Does the PAC equally represent by the existing planning policy community?
- Is the PAC free from excessive political leaders on the committee?
- Is the PAC free from unknown representatives, who only maintain the routine work of their organizations?
- Are the PAC members normally elected or appointed believed to have suitable personalities, moral standards and planning understanding in the areas?

**D. Guidelines for evaluating fairness criteria: agenda and minutes**

*D1. The process should have provision for all PAC members to define planning and development issues before formal development applications are lodged.*

- Does the process give the PAC the opportunity to define planning issues for the decision-making?
- Does the process allow the PAC to question planners and designers and shape the agenda for planning decisions?

*D2. The process should have provision to include all matters for the PAC agenda.*

- Does the process include all planning and development matters in the PAC agenda?

*D3. The meeting minutes should include comments from all planning stakeholders*

- Does the process provide the PAC, the wider public and development proponents with an equal opportunity to include their concerns into the meeting minutes?

*D4. The meeting minutes should available for public perusal and should be distributed among planning stakeholders in good time.*

- Are the minutes publicly available for discussion and access to the wider community?
- Are the minutes distributed to all members in good time?

**E. Guidelines for evaluating fairness criteria: feedback and responsiveness**

*E1. The PAC should perceive that they have received adequate feedback from the planning authority.*

- Does the PAC receive regular feedback from the planning authority?

*E2. The PAC should receive explanations for acceptance, rejection and modification of recommendations.*

- Does the PAC receive justification and adequate explanation why their comments were accepted, modified or rejected?
- Does the consultation process have provisions to reply to and challenge the assertions of authorities relating to the rejection of PAC advice?
- Does the process allow the PAC to be one of the affected parties to seek legal solutions on disagreements?

**Table 8.2: Evaluative criteria for planning advisory committees: effectiveness**

**A. Guidelines for evaluating effective criteria: defined role**

*A1. The terms of reference should clearly define the role of all the planning policy community.*

- Do the terms of reference clearly define the tasks, roles and functions of every discourse participant?
- Does the planning authority clearly define the objectives of consultation with the PAC in the terms of reference?

*A2. All PAC members should have clear understanding about the terms of reference and outcomes of the consultation process in the planning decision.*

- Do the PAC members understand their defined roles and are they determined to carry them out effectively?

*A3. The PAC members should be competent to play their defined role in the planning decisions.*

- Do the PAC members have adequate understanding of planning terms, definitions and design matters to advise the planning authority?
- Is the PAC able to articulate its concerns competently and effectively?

**B. Guidelines for evaluating effective criteria: promote learning**

*B1. The process should have effective outreach programs for the members about the planning laws and design guidelines that are essential to comply with development applications.*

- Does the planning authority organize outreach programs to introduce planning laws, design guidelines and the process of development approval to the PAC members?
- Does the planning authority organize outreach programs for the incumbent planners so they can carry out the consultation process effectively and succinctly?
- If the outreach program is organized, does it give adequate information about neighbourhood indicators to the PAC members?
- Does the process keep the PAC members up-to-date about current changes in planning laws and design guidelines at present and possible changes in the near future?

*B2. The process should have a clear plan for public participation that includes a way for learning for the PAC members.*

- Does the planning authority evaluate its existing context and process to promote a way of further learning to improve its context and process?
- Does the process encourage the informal educative and learning activities for its participants?

**C. Guidelines for evaluating effective criteria: communication**

*C1. The PAC should have regular communication with all the planning policy community.*

- Do the PAC members have effective communication internally with other representatives?
- Does the process provide PAC members with an opportunity to informally discuss their feelings with other members before formal discussion in the meetings?
- Does the PAC have regular communication with the wider public, voluntary organizations and political parties to discuss planning policy?
- Does the PAC chair communicate with other members as well as planning stakeholders effectively and punctually?

*C2. The PAC should have a formal structure to communicate with others in the planning policy community.*

- Does the process have provision for regular communication with the planning and support staff?
- Does the PAC maintain a formal structure to communicate with planning and support staff at the planning authority?
- Does the PAC maintain a common listserv for electronic communication with other planning stakeholders?

- Do the planning authority and support staff respond punctually to the PAC's communications on planning and development matters?

*C3. The PAC should use appropriate mechanisms to effectively communicate through spatial planning data.*

- Do the development proponents use 3D models for displaying development applications during the PAC meetings?
- Does the planning authority provide development applications and neighbourhood information to the Web for PAC members?
- Is the PAC facilitated by the Web-based GIS access to make comments on development applications?

*C4. The process should provide adequate financial and human resources to the PAC for effective communication.*

- Does the PAC receive adequate funding to collect community input, conduct its own research and manage its office activities?
- Does the planning authority provide adequate secretarial support?

**D. Guidelines for evaluating effectiveness criteria: relationships and trust.**

*D1. The PAC members should have amicable relations with each other on the committee.*

- Does the PAC maintain an amicable relationship among all members on the committee?
- Does the chair maintain a good relationship among all members on the committee?
- Does the PAC maintain a responsive relationship with planning and support staff in the planning agency?

*D2. The PAC should maintain amicable relationships with others in the policy community.*

- Is the PAC believed to have an amicable relationship with the development proponents?
- Does the meeting process establish rules about acceptable behaviour at meetings, to be strictly enforced?
- Does the meeting process establish rules to avoid personal attacks during the discussion?

*D3. The PAC member should have trust in the chair conducting the meeting.*

- Do the PAC and development proponents trust the committee chair?
- Does the process indicate the existence of trust among all members regardless of whether they are elected or appointed?

**E. Guidelines for evaluating effectiveness criteria: objective-driven**

*E1. The process should have provision to evaluate authority's objective and the satisfaction of the PAC members.*

- Does the process have any time set aside to evaluate its success or failure and future directions of the committee?
- Does the PAC show satisfaction with the planning outcomes through the consultation process?
- Have the expectations of PAC members been adequately met through the consultation process?

*E2. The PAC should have a provision to monitor its advice being considered in planning decisions.*

- Does the PAC monitor whether its advice is taken into account by the planning authority?

- Does the PAC form sub-committees, when necessary, to monitor its advice being adequately addressed by the planning authority?
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Despite LAPAC's lack of success as a public participation medium, the LAPAC case study provides some practical lessons about how a planning advisory committee can be structured and managed to improve its fairness and effectiveness in the consultation process. The analysis and interpretations of the research findings in the previous chapters produced some wider implications and insights that might be addressed in public participation. The findings also support the importance of having statutory planning advisory committee that serves as an intermediary between the planning authority and the public.

#### **8.4 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CANBERRA**

The Labor Government in the ACT, when elected in October 2001, has termed the current LAPAC process piecemeal and haphazard, and needing to be reformed to make the consultation process more open, transparent and accountable (Australian Labor Party, 2001). This remark by the Minister for Planning has not been qualified through any formal studies or reports except a fact sheet prepared by the Labor Party during the Territory election in October 2001. However, the researcher had many discussions with the planning spokesperson of the Labor Party while he was in opposition (now Minister for Planning) on ACT planning and consultation issues. When the Labor Party was elected in October 2001 it started changing some planning practices that were previously established under the Liberal Government.

Now, some basic agendas have been identified by the ACT Labor Party, about planning and effective consultation on planning and development matters. On 1 July 2003, three new bodies were established to ensure that the Territory's planning, building and land development systems will operate in a far more confident, structured and transparent environment: the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA), which will replace PALM; the Planning and Land Council, a newly formed expert advisory panel on planning matters; and the Land Development Agency (ACTPLA, 2003b: 2).

#### **8.4.1 ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA)**

The ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA) is established to replace PALM. ACTPLA will continue all of the functions of PALM and will take responsibility for land release, leasing, land administration, development assessment and building control (ACTPLA, 2003c). These changes should give ACTPLA a greater degree of independence in its day-to-day operations and lead to more efficient and satisfactory outcomes. While ACTPLA is structured as an independent planning organization, it is subject to some direction by the Minister and the Legislative Assembly. In particular the Minister still retains the power to give direction to ACTPLA about general policy or revisions to the Territory Plan, and also the discretionary 'call-in' power for decision-making; however, he must seek the advice of both ACTPLA and the Planning and Land Council before exercising that power (ACTPLA, 2003a).

#### **8.4.2 Planning and Land Council (P & L Council)**

The ACT Government has established a structure for planning and land management. The main element of this structure is an expert advisory council on planning and land management, the Planning and Land Council (ACTPLA, 2003d). The Planning and Land Council will provide independent, expert advice to the Minister and to ACTPLA on significant planning issues; it will have no decision-making function, its only role is being to provide high-level strategic advice on planning and land management. The Council is not intended to be representative of whole planning policy community, rather all members on the Council are appointed by the Minister for Planning. However, the members represent a range of qualifications and expertise relevant to planning and land management: urban economics, community and social planning, urban and regional planning, environmental management, land development, public policy or public law, urban design, transportation planning, public administration and engineering (ACTPLA, 2003d). The Council met for the first time on 31 July 2003. The Terms of Reference and mandates of this council are not yet published.

#### **8.4.3 Land Development Agency (LDA)**

The Land Development Agency was established to replace the former Land Group, the Kingston Foreshore Development Authority, and the Gungahlin Development Authority (ACTPLA, 2003b). The agency will have a commercial focus and be responsible for

delivery of land, land development and sale, and major development work on behalf of the Government (ACTPLA, 2003e).

Apart from the changes made in the ACT's planning directions, there are also two advisory committees formed to give advice on planning matters to the Minister for Planning. These advisory groups are the Planning and Development Forum (P & D Forum) and the Community Planning Forum (CPF). It seems that currently ACTPLA has three levels of advisory committees: the Planning and Land Council, Planning and Development Forum and Community Planning Forums. The Planning and Land Council and Planning and Development Forum are not the same; they are two separate advisory bodies, however, CPF are seven committees with different names, which will replace the previous six LAPACs. One extra CPF has created by dividing the area of previous Inner North and Majura LAPACs into three CPF.

#### **8.4.4 The Planning and Development Forum (P & D Forum)**

The P & D Forum was established in November 2002; its members were appointed by the Minister for Planning. This Forum is an industry and community-based body, which takes a strategic overview and promotes input to the management of the ACT Government's planning and development policy agenda (PALM, 2002b). Some LAPAC members are also included in this Forum. The P & D Forum will consider planning issues until such time as the Planning and Land Council is established. Though the Planning and Land Council was established in July 2003, the Minister for Planning has decided to maintain the Forum as a policy-level multi-representation advisory committee. The Forum advises the Minister for Planning and PALM on current planning policies and initiatives, including the Canberra Spatial Plan, Neighbourhood Planning, Open Space Review, ACT Code, Draft Territory Plan Variation 200 [the Garden City Variation], Master Planning for town, group and local centres and Community Facility Needs Assessments.

#### **8.4.5 The Community Planning Forums (CPF)**

The new Labor Government proposed to establish smaller planning groups, to replace the existing LAPACs from 1 July 2003. Seven Community Planning Forums (CPF) will be established across Canberra to advise the Minister for Planning and the ACTPLA on planning and land management. As promised by the Labor Party at the last ACT election, the Community Planning Forums will replace the current Local Area Planning Advisory

Committees; while the new Planning and Land Council will provide expert advice to the planning authority and to the Minister on the strategic and policy level framework, the ACT Government wished to ensure that community input at the neighbourhood level was also guaranteed. The Forum will do this by providing a neighbourhood focus to both the planning authority and the Minister for Planning on broad planning and policy issues and significant development proposals (PALM, 2003c). As an advisory body, the proposed CPF will provide advice on policy and strategic issues, including draft variations to the Territory Plan, development and review of the Canberra Spatial Plan and preparation and review of Master Plans. CPF will contribute to the development and review of Neighbourhood Plans and also play a role in the quality audits of development applications and provide feedback on whether the outcomes sought are being achieved. Further input on policy matters may arise from such audits. In establishing the CPF ACTPLA is now seeking a mixture of skills and balance within the groups, including gender and age balance, geographical spread, representation from different housing and household types, and representation of a diverse range of interests and backgrounds.

A number of neighbourhood planning workshops and public meetings were held in 2002 to develop Neighbourhood Plans in LAPAC areas and to form new planning advisory committees. The main findings of the workshop reports include the inadequate involvement of residents' and community groups in the planning decisions; participants also expressed themselves in great detail and depth concerning many aspects of an inclusive, transparent and collaborative neighbourhood planning process where all voices are heard equally (PALM, 2002a). This thesis has found similar concerns raised by the ACT planning community, which have been discussed in Chapter 5, 6 and 7. The Table 8.3 is a summary table of themes that emerged from the workshop.

The ACTPLA is now currently working with the LAPACs to ensure a smooth transition to the new Community Planning Forums (CPF). However, the Office of the Minister for Planning indicated that the LAPACs would be in operation until the community was agreed on the Terms of Reference. Even though a brief Terms of Reference (PALM, 2003a) of CPF clearly mentioned that the last meeting of the LAPACs would be held in June 2003, LAPAC was still in operation. There is no further timeline for the introduction of CPF.

**Table 8.3: Summary table of themes emerging from the workshop**

Question No. or Headline <sup>2</sup>	Issue	Number of ideas
1	Inclusive and transparent community participation in neighbourhood planning	99
3	Ensure community consultation and collaboration that is equitable and produces tangible outcome	82
2	The ability of residents to influence decision-making and planning processes	65
3	Identify and employ effective and transparent planning process	56
2	Concerns over decision-making processes and obtaining a balanced view	48
2	Concerns over power of particular groups to exert influence over the neighbourhood planning process	39
3	Identify and implement agreed planning process	20
H	Support of residents' controlling neighbourhood planning	16
H	Inclusive consultation and agreement	14
H	Community and residents participation in and support of neighbourhood planning	11
1	Accessibility of information	10
H	Popular and successful process	9
2	Lack of openness and transparency in the political process	7

Source: PALM (2002a: xi)

### 8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The task of studying on public participation is complex, and evaluation of the existing process is much more difficult as it requires individual interpretations and reactions to others behaviour on the issues commonly shared by the participants. This study has evaluated the fairness and effectiveness of the consultation process, and developed a conceptual model for a planning advisory committee. The conceptual model also suggests some evaluative criteria and question sets. Despite the limitations mentioned above, the recommended conceptual model has provided an approach to evaluating planning advisory committees. However, the research model and techniques can be applied

<sup>2</sup> Question 1- What do you want from neighbourhood planning?

Question 2- What are your concerns about neighbourhood planning?

Question 3- What actions need to be taken to ensure the success of neighbourhood planning

Headlines-H- "The New Canberran"- the best possible outcome for neighbourhood planning



elsewhere, particularly in planning and environmental advisory groups. The study suggests the following directions for the future research.

1. There is a need for further research on the committees' input into the planning decisions. This would allow the researcher to determine whether PAC input is accepted and used in the final planning decisions. Further study should attempt to clarify whether PAC input is rejected because all PAC input is routinely ignored, or if PAC input is rejected on the basis of justifiable planning reasoning.
2. Further research could determine how planning authority structures the committee's advice. This would allow the researcher to understand the competency of the planning authority to analyse thoroughly the committee input for the final decisions.
3. Further research needs to be carried out to measure the gap in expectation between the community and the planning agency on decision outcomes. A survey could therefore be conducted to determine the rationale of differing expectations among all the planning policy community and suggest ways of bridging the gap. This would formulate a strategic approach to understanding the expectations of planning stakeholders and to meeting those expectations in such a way that all parties feel empowered.
4. A study assessing the feedback and responsiveness between the PAC and planning agency is also recommended. This would allow the researcher to evaluate the minute taking process and to understand how PAC members contact the planning department and receive no feedback in time. All meeting minutes indicate that member contact many ACT departments for relevant information and make pertinent queries, but departments normally do not reply to members unless asked repeatedly.

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**APPENDIX—A**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

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**1. A FOCUS INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LAPAC MEMBERS**

**General Information**

Which group do/did you represent on LAPAC?

Why did you decide to become involved in LAPAC?

Were your expectations about the participation process met through LAPAC?

Has your involvement in LAPAC improved your understanding of planning procedures?

In what areas was your understanding improved?

Were there some important issues and rules that you believe central to the participation process?

What are these issues and rules that your believe were central to the participation process?

**Perceived Role of LAPAC**

Which of the following best describes the role of LAPAC that you are involved with, as you perceive it?

Advisory		Public Participation	
Decision-making		Lobbying/Advocacy	
Mediation		Research/Fact Finding	
Watchdog		Others	

Who sets the agenda for the LAPAC meetings?

Do you think the present agenda setting procedure is appropriate?

What alternative suggestions do you have for the agenda setting procedure?

Do you consider the balance of the membership on LAPAC is currently correct?

All LAPAC members deserve to know that their comments were considered, and should receive timely response, not just an acknowledgment.

The information provided by PALM is always adequate for informed discussion.

The committee chair conducts meetings in a professional and competent manner

LAPAC members consider that the time between the announcements of the consultation events, information sessions, and the submission of deadlines for the brief is sufficient.

#### Conduct of meetings

How well does PALM administer the consultation process in the following forms of public participation?

Informal consultation with various groups?

Consultation committee such as LAPAC?

Does the LAPAC monitor whether its advice is considered in the overall planning process?

Does the committee receive regular reports on what recommendations and advice are accepted, rejected or modified by PALM?

If recommendations and/or advice are known to have been rejected, then what action does the LAPAC take?

#### Use of visual displays

Access to various data to make informed-decision is adequate.

Developer occasionally presents unclear and inaccurate maps (geographic data).

Materials submitted by Developer are inadequate.

#### Planning understanding

The language and terms used in Master Plans and Development Applications are often difficult to understand.

Do you think all LAPAC members have an adequate understanding of the Master Plans and Development Applications?

What level of understanding do you think is needed to make comments on the Master Plans and Development Applications?

#### Process of LAPAC

I feel that LAPAC is a good platform of community consultation.

LAPAC exists in order to give an impression that the public input has genuinely been taken into consideration.

LAPAC is actually functioning as a 'rubber-stamp' for PALM activities.

I feel that all members are just raising issues for consideration during decision-making, but have no power to influence the final outcomes.

Planning problems and issues are conceptualised by PALM and/or developers, not by the LAPAC and/or other community groups.

How satisfied are you with the overall consultation process of LAPAC?

Discussion about LAPAC and other planning policy community

I feel that the time allocated for consultation process with other stakeholders is sufficient

All public meetings and information nights have a tight time schedule. Many people have very little chance to say anything due to time constraints.

LAPAC meetings are just formality, decisions have already been made prior to meetings.

How effective are the present methods of providing information to the LAPAC for making informed comments on various planning issues?

Do you think your LAPAC meetings are enjoyable?

Do you think your LAPAC is a forum of group decision-making?

Interventions and recommendations

LAPAC should have opportunity to attend various departmental planning meetings (such as CMD, ACTEWAGL, Urban Services, and Developers) at the early stage of planning process.

Expansion of LAPAC role from only advising to directly coordinating and collecting public inputs is essential.

Do you think any structural changes are necessary to make the present participation process more effective?

What types of structural changes do you suggest?

Public notices concerning issues to be discussed by LAPAC must be designed to attract attention and displayed in the most widely read sections of local publications.

PALM staff need adequate communication skills to conduct consultation process with LAPAC.

LAPAC should have authority for decision-making on the certain areas of local planning.

LAPAC should establish a sub committee to oversee whether their comments are taken into consideration.

**Thank you very much for your cooperation**

## 2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WIDER PUBLIC

### General Information

How often do you attend the LAPAC meetings?

Were there some important issues and matters that you believe central to the participation process?

Were your expectations about the participation process met through LAPAC?

Has your attendance in LAPAC meetings improved your understanding of planning procedures?

### Perceived Role of LAPAC

Which of the following best describes the role of LAPAC that you perceive?

Advisory		Public Participation	
Decision-making		Lobbying/Advocacy	
Mediation		Research/Fact Finding	
Watchdog		Others	

Do you consider the balance of the membership on LAPAC is currently correct?

Do you believe that the wider public have adequate opportunity to add items to LAPAC agenda?

Do you agree LAPAC is able to convey your ideas into the planning decisions?

Do you believe LAPAC provide adequate opportunity to wider public for a discussion on Development Applications?

Do you think Planning Authority responds to your comments in a timely manner?

Do you think committee chair conducts meeting in a professional and competent manner?

### Conduct of meetings

How well does PALM administer the consultation process?

Do you think LAPAC is a good platform for public participation?

Do you often receive feedback from developers and/or planning staff?



### Planning understanding

The language and terms used in planning documents are often difficult to understand.

Do you believe all LAPAC members have adequate understanding of planning and development matters?

What level of understanding do you think is needed to make comments on planning and development matters?

### Process of LAPAC

Do you agree the existence of LAPAC is to give an impression that the public input has genuinely been taken into consideration?

Do you believe LAPAC has real influence to planning decisions or only functioning as a 'rubber-stamp' for PALM activities?

Do you think, planning initiatives are driven by developers, not by the professional planning authority?

### Discussion about LAPAC and other planning policy community

Do you feel the time allocated for various consultation events with community and residents' association is sufficient?

Do you think consultation events are just formality, decisions have already been made?

### Interventions and recommendations

Do you think wider public should be given more opportunity to discuss issues that affect them?

Do you believe expansion of LAPAC role from only advising to directly coordinating and collecting wider public inputs is essential?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

### 3. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PLANNING STAFF

#### General Information

Name. \_\_\_\_\_ Education. \_\_\_\_\_ Age. \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M. \_\_\_ F. \_\_\_

How long have you been involved in the LAPAC process?

#### Fairness and process outcomes

Which of the following best describes the role of LAPAC as you perceived it?

- |                 |                          |                       |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Advisory        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Participation  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Decision-making | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lobbying/Advocacy     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mediation       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Research/Fact Finding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Watchdog        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Others                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Neutral         | <input type="checkbox"/> |                       |                          |

#### Fairness

What did you see your role in the process?

How do you recruit members on the LAPAC?

Do you follow any standard selection criteria?

How would you consider the balance of membership on LAPAC is currently correct?

Please describe why it is not correct?

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Do you provide any spatial information to the LAPAC members, particularly to a new member?

Who provide the necessary information to the LAPAC members—PALM or developers?

What do you do with the LAPAC comments?

#### Competence:

Do you think all LAPAC members have an adequate understanding of planning processes?

Do you feel that the language and terms used in planning documents are often difficult to understand by the LAPAC members?

What level of understanding do you think is needed to make comments on planning proposals?

### **Evaluation on TO by the LAPACs**

Who first conceptualise planning issues for development and re-development?

Are the residents and community groups given opportunity to initiate planning matters?

Do you feel that LAPAC is a good platform of community consultation?

Do you think that time allocated for the consultation with LAPAC is sufficient.

Do you think access to planning data by the LAPAC members is adequate?

Do you think the committee chair conducts the meetings in a professional and competent manner?

### **Intervention**

Do you feel that planning agency should organize orientation program on Planning Law and Act for the committee members?

Do you feel that an information pack containing the background information of LAPAC should be provided to new members?

Do you agree that LAPAC should be formed on the basis of intensity of development and re-development work in the LAPAC area?

Do you agree with a proposal of giving LAPAC a legal base to be a part of Administrative Appeal Tribunal (AAT)?

Do you believe that advisory committee on planning and development matters should only be a body of planners and design experts?

What recommendations do you have to make planning advisory committee fair and effective?

**Thank you very much for your cooperation.**

#### **4. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING**

You said '*planning in Canberra has become arrogant, piecemeal and haphazard*'. Could you please explain your statement?

What explanation do you have when you say '*PALM is functioning on ad hoc basis. It does not have any strategic visions*'

Do you think LAPAC inputs have genuinely been taken into consideration?

You said '*planning initiatives are driven by developers not driven by professional planning authority*'? Could you please discuss your statement?

What example do you use when you say, "*Liberal want to put limits on what LAPACs can comments on*"?

What is the rationale behind your proposal to change LAPACs into NPGs?

Have you evaluated current LAPAC process?

Would you please explain the nature and structure of your proposed NPGs and an independent planning authority?

How will you rationalise your Labor's proposed Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) to replace Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) without a judicial body?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

## APPENDIX--B

### LAPAC MINUTES

Meeting commenced 8.10pm

Attendance	Present/Apology		Present/Apology	
Rod Campbell Narrabundah Residential Rep		x	Stan-Anton Bevanda Narrabundah Business Rep	x
Anne Forrest Griffith residential Rep	x		Manu Assadi Griffith Business Rep	x
Rob Painter Kingston Residential Rep.		x	Peter Jansen Kingston Business Rep.	
Forrest Residential Rep.			Ali Nasserj Forrest Business Rep.	
John Keeley ONCC	x		Julie McCarron Benson ONCC	x
Jonathan Mandl GNCA	x		Trish Bootes/Jerry Fitzgibbons GNCA	xx
Nancy Louise McCullough Red Hill Residential Rep		x		
David Haylock PALM	x		Tara Powell For LAPAC Coordinator	x

Convenor: Anne Forrest

Members of the public: 1

1. Welcome and Apologies/Declaration of Conflicts of Interest
  - The Convenor welcomed the LAPAC members and Maureen Hartung of Blue Gum School.
  - No conflicts of interest were declared.
2. Minutes from Previous Meeting
  - Minutes accepted with no amendments.

#### MATTERS ARISING

#### Community Needs

At Convenor's request, Ms. Maureen Hartung gave an update on issue involving community facility land:

Blue Gum School, a not-for-profit community school, of approx. 160 students and 26 staff, has been seeking a school site for 6 years. The primary school will be without accommodation at the end of 2003. The school lodged an Application for the Direct Sale of a Lease for the Purpose of a Community Organisation, over the O'Connell Centre Building, part of Section 78 Griffith. Julie McKinnon, PALM's Land Group, rejected the Application, saying the community facility is not surplus until the Education Dept moves out. Once it is vacated, the facility will be handed to the new commercially-focused Land Development Agency (LDA), for disposal.

Michelle Frost, Property Section, Urban Services, has advised Blue Gum that surplus school sites are handed to the Property Section of Urban Services. First-of-all, other Government Departments are asked if they want surplus school sites, e.g. for office accommodation. If no government department is interested, Ms Frost will advise the Government that the site is a high profile community facility, so a Direct Sale option should not be considered. Instead, Ms Frost will recommend that the site be handed over to the LDA, for sale by public auction, where not-for-profit community groups will be bidding against commercial property developers. The objective is to achieve the best price for a government asset. The wishes of local residents are secondary to the interests of the whole Canberra community.

When asked about Simon Corbell's press release of 12 June 2002, and his promises to community groups, Ms Frost stated that Corbell is not the Minister responsible, so his

statements would not be taken into account. Further, that his release had omitted a number of steps.

When asked about community groups' access to community facilities, Ms Frost stated that all applications for accommodation should be lodged with Totalcare. Community facility accommodation is offered based on strict chronological order of groups on the waiting list. Issues such as compatibility or priority of access are not considered. Ms Frost could not say how long the list is, or where Blue Gum School is placed on the list. Facilities offered by Totalcare are normally 1 or 2 rooms, available on a short-term basis only, until the government needs the space again. Ms Frost would not recommend that not-for-profit community schools be permitted to access the Direct Sale process for surplus school sites.

Action: Anne will take questions of community facility land & not-for-profit community organisations to PDF [Planning and Development Forum]

Anne thanked Maureen for briefing those present.

.....  
**Hungarian Australian Club**  
Not discussed.

**3. LAPAC Correspondence**  
.... Circulated

**4. Report to LAPAC re CPF Meeting with Minister**  
Members received a detailed report, written by Rod, via email.

**5. Update on DV 200... Keith Burnham, PALM Officer**

- 1.Applications are being assessed against V200, with the removal of the 5% rule for dual occupancies when the dual occupancy clause in V200 commences under the Land Act.
- 2.The Government considered the report from the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment and discussed it with Kerry Tucker who indicated she would support the variation if unit title for new dual occupancies in suburban areas were prohibited.
- 3.The tabling statement was prepared and has to sit for a period of 5 sitting days, with 19 August 2003 being the next sitting day.
4. On 19 June 2003 Vicki Dunne moved a disallowance motion, which will be discussed on 19 or 20 August 2003.
5. If the Government, with Kerry Tucker's support, reject the motion, ACTPLA will notify that the Variation has commenced and the 5% rule has been removed.
6. V200 will limit the number of basements in core areas, protecting the streetscape.

*Comments/Questions from the LAPAC:*

- Anne stated that the LAPAC was aware that Kerry Tucker had requested more wide-ranging amendments in an effort to improve DV 200. However, the community had been informed that the Minister refused to negotiate any changes other than those highlighted in the June version of V200.
- John asked about the reference to 500sqm [GFA of retail space] shopping centres....  
The amount of commercial GFA in a local centre was the criteria used in determining whether a local centre should be shown on the Territory Plan map with a surrounding Core Area. Generally, local centres with less than 500sq m of retail GFA have not been included.

- LAPAC members are concerned about the lack of neighbourhood planning prior to V200 and feel that Narrabundah and Griffith should be the focus...  
There are existing controls over Core Areas. Furthermore, there will be increased protection in Suburban Areas. The resources were simply not available for neighbourhood planning to be implemented in all areas prior to V200. However, Inner South has a good case for inclusion in the next round of neighbourhood planning.
- Would block amalgamation in Core Areas be possible?....  
Yes. Block amalgamation is possible now.
- What of the approval of basement car parks with no setback from the edge of the block?.....  
The application would necessarily involve consideration of the proposed dwelling. Generally, there should be a setback of 3metres on both side boundaries for dual occupancy proposals. *Keith advised that the particular circumstances of the case referred to by way of illustration [La Perouse Street, Red Hill] should be addressed through the HQSD case officer.*
- What about granny flats by extensions, or by garage conversions?.....  
V200 introduces new definitions of multi unit housing, including self-contained areas with separate access [viewed as separate dwellings].
- Limits on private open space?....  
There is a formula to be met.
- What of the application of HQSD?.....  
The HQSD process is now a mandatory part of the pre-application process. Where proponents propose not to comply with numeric acceptable standards then a case must be made that the performance criteria is met.
- What of the question of social planning?.....  
Neighbourhood planning should address social planning.
- There is concern about the reliance on HQSD process, and the lack of focus on immediate neighbourhood areas and essential / community services.  
This issue is addressed at the neighbourhood planning level, which includes community input concerning Core Areas.  
David emphasised that planning is done at a holistic level. Suburbs are considered at a different level within this context.

Note: Coordinator....Keith's extensive notes are to be included with the minutes when distributed.

Anne thanked Keith for giving so generously of his time

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## 6. HQSD Process: latest information on projected outcomes, parameters, mandatory components, etc .... David Haylock

1. There is now a more rigorous assessment of proposals in the HQSD process from a regulatory point of view
2. New processes/procedures have been initiated in the DA process to improve decision-making and allow mediation. Information will be included on the website when available.
3. Consideration is been given to making senior staff available at the shopfront.
4. There are 3 versions of HQSD at ACTPLA i.e. non-single residential, single residential and bushfire.
5. The bushfire assessment process includes 3 categories:  
Category 1 - If previous plans with very minor changes will not require HQSD;  
Category 2 - Similar plans with changes to original plans will require advisory HQSD; and  
Category 3 - New residence larger than original will require HQSD.

6. New houses, major and second storey extensions, proposals with significant impact on streetscapes, proposals extending past the building line, applications requiring public notification and applications in heritage areas now require HQSD
7. An application involving trees may require a site inspection to determine what action is required.

*Comments/Questions from the LAPAC:*

- What happens if plans carry misinformation?  
If this is the case, it will be identified in the assessment period. And, if it is more than a minor issue, the proponent will be asked to resubmit amended plans.
- Anne questioned the relevance of HQSD in heritage areas...  
ACTPLA will liaise closely with the Heritage Unit in all Das in Heritage Areas.
- Does the HQSD process address territorial significance as identified by PPN6?.....  
DV200 has tried to quantify it. PPN6 is viewed as a guideline.
- Is consideration given to the significance of setbacks of existing houses when a new development is being considered?.....  
It is considered, as part of streetscape.
- What is categorised as non-single residential?.....  
Dual occupancies, multi unit developments and commercial buildings are classified as non-single residential.
- Manu asked about the new statutory authority and accountability?....  
The new Authority is responsible for its own decisions. Delegation derives from the Chief Planner. COMLAP is now integrated into the Authority. ACTPLA is subject to FOI and the Ombudsman.
- What is the departmental relationship with the NCA?.....  
There is a good working relationship with the NCA.

.....

**7. DV re Whitley Houses on Canberra Ave**

Action: Convenor to draft submission on behalf of LAPAC. Feedback will be incorporated.

**8. Progress Report on DAs**

Not discussed.

**9. Development Applications for Comment/s**

*DA20032793 B1/23, S1 Griffith Cnr Bougainville & Flinders Way [formally Woolworth's]*

No comment.

*DA20032686 B0 S00 Cnr Furneaux and Flinders Way*

Action: Convenor to draft response obo LAPAC

*DA20032892 B14 S19 Griffith Cnr Eyre and Oxley St [Eastlake Cub]*

Action: Convenor to draft response obo LAPAC

*DA20036564 B11/12, S23 Griffith Cnr Cunningham and Canberra Avenue*

Action: Convenor to draft response obo LAPAC; to check Heritage Council advice before responding

**10. Other Business**

None.

**11. Close**

Meeting closed at 10.50pm



APPENDIX--C

**AGENDA**  
**BURLEY GRIFFIN LAPAC**  
**7.30pm Wednesday 2 July 2003**  
**Deakin Soccer Club**  
**Grose Street, Deakin**

Please note any changes to the agenda are to be confirmed through the LAPAC Convenor or LAPAC Coordinator

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**
3. **Southern Cross Homes – Peter Johns and Colette Mackay of Land Group**
4. **Minutes from Previous Meeting**  
*Matters Arising*
5. **Progress Report on Outstanding Development Applications (DAs)**  
*(Report circulated to all members)*
6. **LAPAC Correspondence**
7. **Development Applications for Comments**
  - *DA20032598 Block 16,18 Section 57 Yarralumla Cnr Mueller & Bentham St*  
*Multi unit Development* *cob15/7/03*

Note: DA's sent last month were (no meeting was held in June):

  - *DA20030316 Block 3 Section 33 Garran* *cob13/6/03*
  - *DA20031622 Block 35,36 Section 37 Hughes* *cob 3/6/03*
8. **Other Business**
9. **Outstanding Items**
10. **Close**

**APPENDIX—D**

Australian Capital Territory

# **Local Area Planning Advisory Committee Protocol**

A framework for the  
- Community, Industry and Government -  
working together on planning and development issues

October 2000

## 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the principal recommendations of the review of Local Area Planning Advisory Committees (LAPACs), February - April 1999, was that there should be a Protocol that sets out the roles, responsibilities and relationships between LAPACs, the community, the property and development industry (industry) and Planning and Land Management Group (PALM).

## 2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Protocol are to:

- Clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations of the main players,
- Enhance LAPACs' ability to contribute positively to the management of change in Canberra's urban environment,
- Promote to industry the advantages of using LAPACs as a method of gauging community perceptions of development proposals and seeking constructive community input, and
- Reaffirm the commitment of each group to the principle of mutual respect for all other participants in their contribution to the planning process.

## 3 UNDERTAKINGS FROM

In addition to their shared commitment to the general objectives of this protocol, the parties undertake to pursue its implementation in the following specific ways:

- a. The Minister for Urban Services to;
  - Continue to support the role that LAPACs have in the planning and development of Canberra,
  - Agree to meet the Convenors regularly and have the minutes of these meetings circulated to all LAPAC members,
  - Encourage all ACT Government agencies to consult with LAPACs on pertinent issues, including ACT Housing on relevant local developments and ACT Heritage on broad policy and planning matters, and
  - Consider LAPAC proposals for ongoing reform of the consultation process.
- b. LAPACs to;
  - Provide a forum where mutual respect and courtesy are shown to all concerned,
  - Endeavour to consult the local community and concentrate on planning issues that have local implications,
  - Review strategic planning issues of interest to the local region,
  - Complete, and then maintain Community Value Statements (CVS) for their areas,
  - Finalise the LAPAC agenda one week before the meeting. Only the Convenor may then add any items in the week before the meeting,
  - Consider proposals against their CVS and/or the perceived views of the local community,
  - Run meetings efficiently and effectively, and finish by 11.00pm at the latest,
  - Agree that individual members declare possible conflict of interest and that they abstain from voting on associated motions if requested by a majority of members,
  - Make every effort to discuss items at which developers are present at the agreed nominated time,

- Comment as necessary/appropriate on all proposals and Development Applications (DAs) appearing on the agenda (assuming adequate time and documentation is provided), and
  - Agree that if commenting to the media as a LAPAC spokesperson, members should seek to confine their comments to issues related to their LAPAC role. Those making comments to the media should advise either the PALM Communications Officer or the Minister's Media Adviser of their comments as soon as possible, as a courtesy to the Minister.
- c. Industry to;
- Take into consideration CVSs when developments are being designed,
  - Accept that LAPACs have a part to play in the pre-lodgement consultation process, which may enhance the design,
  - Promote to their clients consultation with LAPACs on proposals prior to lodging DAs,
  - Provide documentation of proposals in a professional standard (using PALM's checklists as a guide to the detail required),
  - Recognise the LAPAC as a forum where mutual respect and courtesy are shown to, and given by, all concerned, and
  - Agree to the 'one week' agenda cut off, and accepting the Convenor's decision on whether to include additional agenda items.
- d. PALM to;
- Take into account CVSs properly prepared through consultation with local residents and other stakeholders, and submitted to the Minister for consideration, in the formulation of draft Territory Plan variations, Master plans and planning guidelines, and in the consideration of specific land use and development proposals.
  - Promote, within available resources, LAPACs to the wider community, as their voice in planning.
  - Encourage applicants/developers to discuss their proposals with LAPACs and the affected members of the community, prior to lodging an application,
  - Encourage industry to provide DAs to a professional standard,
  - Add information on LAPAC meeting times to relevant DA notification letters that are sent to adjacent lessees, and ensure that all references to DAs contain both a street address and block/section numbers,
  - Encourage applicants to lodge potentially sensitive applications in a time frame to allow the next scheduled meeting of the relevant LAPAC to consider it.
  - Set the agenda with Convenors, detailing indicative times for each agenda item, and advising developers when their proposals are listed on the agenda and advise relevant members of late additions to the agenda that are pertinent to their area,
  - Provide copies of DAs that are Publicly Notified to the Convenor and the suburb representative within two working days of the notice appearing in the local press,
  - Arrange for presentations to LAPACs on relevant policy and neighbourhood planning proposals,
  - Ensure that the LAPAC Coordinator or a substitute attend all regular meetings and whenever possible, have a member of PALM's technical staff attend to provide planning/leasing advice (PALM staff are not required to stay at meetings that continue after 11 pm),
  - Provide a brief report on the outcomes of all DAs commented on,
  - Have technical staff provide appropriate background advice on DAs to facilitate informed LAPAC discussion,
  - Accept, in the majority of cases, comments from LAPACs on DAs up to two days after the regular meeting, even if the public notification period has closed,
  - Consider LAPAC comments on DAs and provide feedback on consideration of these comments,
  - Distribute feedback from LAPACs to relevant staff/agencies, and
  - Provide draft minutes of meetings to the Convenor within five working days.

## APPENDIX—E

### BACKGROUND TO CANBERRA CASE STUDY

#### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Appendix is to discuss a background of Canberra, with reference to LAPAC areas. The redevelopment of Central Canberra and Belconnen areas has resulted in physical changes. Reviewing the process of changes in these two urban districts, offers, valuable insights into the research objective of the thesis, that is, how the resident and community, and other urban policy community input can be integrated into the planning decisions. The background information highlights only the basic issues such as demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Canberra, and its relation to the case study areas.

The Australian Capital Territory is 80 km from north to south and is about 30 km wide. It is landlocked within the mountainous county of southeastern New South Wales, 305 km from Sydney by road. Canberra and its surrounding suburbs are in the northeast of the territory, while the Namadgi National Park occupies the whole south-western area. The landscape setting of the ACT has been a central element of Canberra's image as the 'bush capital' and as a 'garden city'. This setting includes the rural to urban fringe areas, the bushland within the city stretching to the hills and the distant mountains that frame the city (Reid, 2002).

#### CASE STUDY BACKGROUND

Canberra is internationally acclaimed as a planned city with high levels of amenity and liveability that enable its residents to enjoy a high quality of urban life. As a national capital, Canberra is a special place, which is of significant to all Australians. Its role as the nation's capital require it to efficiently and attractively accommodate the functions as the seat of Commonwealth Government, the judiciary, foreign missions, hosting national institutions, such as the War Memorial, National Gallery, National Library, National Archives, National Museum, and National Science and Technology Centre. The Territory contains five major urban district—Canberra Central, Woden Valley/Weston Creek, Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Gungahlin, as well as three smaller settlements of Tharwa, Hall and Oaks Estate. Each major district has its own town centre, and most residential

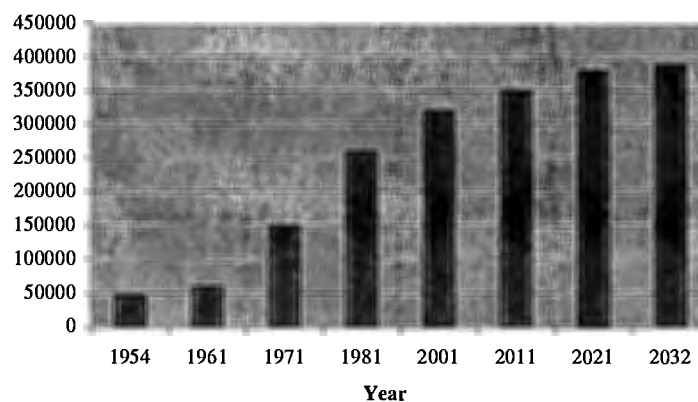
areas also have their own group and local centres. The ACT also has three industrial areas—Fyshwick, Hume and Mitchell, which are separated from the residential areas and town centre. The case study LAPAC is covered only in the Canberra Central and Belconnen areas, where development pressure is high and requires community input on urban development and revitalization programs. There is no LAPAC in other three urban districts; however, community councils, residents associations and other interest groups in these districts consult when necessary.

### **Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics of LAPAC Areas**

#### ***Demographics***

The estimated resident population of the ACT at June 2002 was 321,800 people (159,000 males and 162,800 females) (ACT Government, 2003). There were 114,800 households (an average of 2.6 persons per households (an average of 2.6 persons per household) in the ACT. The ACT population projections 2002-2032 and Beyond predicts that on current trends the population of Canberra would grow to approximately 389,000 by 2032. This reflects continuing low levels of fertility and net migration of Canberra about 500 people per year. In this population scenario, the ACT will have an increasingly ageing population, with an estimated median age of 43.3 years in 2032.

**Figure AE 1: Population projection in ACT**

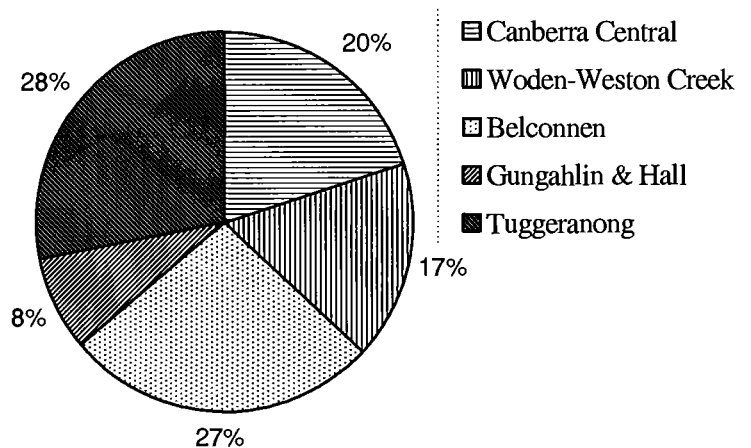


Source: ACT Government (2003, cited in ACTPLA, 2003f)

Migration can obviously increase the rate of population growth and population levels, however, it can do little to fundamentally rebalance the age structure of the population. In 2002 the proportion of the people aged between 0-4 years was 6.4 per cent which is

predicted to decline to 4.54 per cent over 30 years in 2032. The proportion of people aged years and over will increase to 22 per cent in 2032, which was only 8.78 per cent in 2002 (ACT Government, 2003). Figure AE 1 indicates that population projection in Canberra over 30 years time and Figure AE 2 indicates current population distribution in five urban districts. The Figure AE 2 also indicates that nearly half of the total population e.g. 150,808 (47 per cent) live in LAPAC areas (Central Canberra and Belconnen, 20 per cent and 27 per cent respectively).

Figure AE 2: Current population distribution



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001)

However, the population of each LAPAC area are not evenly distributed (Table AE 1). The West Belconnen and Ginninderra LAPAC have more than 40,000 people. However, LAPACs in the Inner City areas were designed on the basis that each LAPAC broadly homogenous and of generally equal population. Each LAPAC in Inner City incorporated a section of Northbourne Avenue (Inner North and Majura LAPAC) and Adelaide Avenue (Burley Griffin and Manuka LAPAC).

The continued growth of Canberra's population will impact on the city, especially areas closer to the Central Business District. This pressure has also been expanded to Belconnen area, which is closer to Central Canberra. These impacts will include increasing demand for affordable housing in the inner city areas, pressure to improve transport links, additional economic development, access to water and various environmental issues, including water quality (PALM, 2002c: 39). Thus, these areas are under extensive urban

revitalization programs, in order to meet the current market demand of affordable housing units in inner city areas.

**Table AE 1: Population distribution in LAPAC areas**

Name of the LAPAC	Population (2001)
Burly Griffin	11,573
Ginninderra	43,116
Inner North	14,645
Majura	21,085
Manuka	16,760
West Belconnen	41,628
Total	150,808

Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001)

### ***Housing***

Housing is a major land user in Canberra and the largest single activity in the city area and perhaps the most visible aspect of the structure and character of the city. The location and nature of housing are critical in influencing the shape of the city. Many of the demographic and economic changes that are occurring in the city will affect the level and nature of demand for housing. Access to appropriate housing is important for all groups in the community and it enables maintenance of diversity and social balance, which is important to the effective operation of the city (PALM, 2002c: 42).

In 2001, there were 121,730 dwellings in the ACT. Out of these more than 76 per cent were separate dwellings and around 24 per cent were other dwellings including flats, row houses and town houses (2003f: 23). More recently, there has been a shift towards construction of higher density dwellings, such as townhouses, apartments and flats. This shift is most evident in the Inner North LAPAC areas of Braddon, Turner and Manuka LAPAC area of Kingston. With increased dwelling numbers have come increased populations in inner city areas. However, the extent of future demand in Canberra for higher density housing forms is uncertain. Whatever, the future holds in terms of housing demand; the current committed areas alone will not meet the estimated demand for housing under the current official moderate and high growth projections. The current possibility for residential development in LAPAC areas, such as West Belconnen, Majura and Ginninderra LAPACs, are Bruce, McKellar, Lawson, Dunlop and North Watson. There are



other vacant sites also explored for residential development in West Bonython, East O'Malley and Gungahlin.

### ***Health and Education***

In ACT, people have adequate access to services and facilities, such as health and education, including hospitals, childcare, aged persons housing, sport and recreation facilities and religious and cultural facilities (ACTPLA, 2003f: 29). Canberrans have also opportunity to be involved in the consultation processes in determining appropriate services and facilities for the community.

The ACT is currently serviced by three public hospitals and nine private hospitals (six of which are for day surgery only). Two public hospitals namely "Canberra Hospital" and "Calvary Hospital" are in LAPAC areas. However, hospitals are only one part of the provision of health services, providing acute, and usually short stay episodes. Other services are provided through multi-disciplinary teams at the major town centres and regional shopping centres (ACTPLA, 2003f). It is noteworthy to mention that the life expectancy at birth in the ACT is high. In 1998-2000, ACT males had the longest life expectancy in Australia while females had the second longest behind Western Australia (ABS, 2001).

It is also mentionable that the ACT has high participation in sports and physical activities. In 1999-2000 participation rates for all people aged over 18 was 65.3 per cent in the ACT, which was well above the national rate of 54.7 per cent. Similarly, in the education, Canberra has the highest qualifications for people aged 15 years and over in Australia. Around 26 per cent of people in this group have a bachelor degree as the highest level of qualification. In every suburb there is a primary school. All universities in Canberra are in the Central Canberra and in the Belconnen region.

### ***Economic Growth***

Historically, Canberra's economy has had a very different structure to the national economy with the domination of public sectors as the seat of Commonwealth Government in ACT (ACTPLA, 2003f). Currently, 83 per cent of office space in the ACT is being occupied by the Commonwealth agencies. Thus, the ACT's gross state product (GSP) per head of mean population is higher than Australia's gross domestic product (GDP) per head

of mean population. GSP is the state equivalent of GDP and is a measure of the total market value of goods and services in the ACT after costs are deducted. Compensation of employees has been the major contributor to the ACT's GSP, accounting for 61 per cent of GSP and reflecting the knowledge based rather than industrial structure of Canberra's economy. However, since 1996, the public sector employment has fallen from 60 per cent to 40 per cent (ACTPLA, 2003g).

On the key measures of economic performance – production, income, consumption, investment and wealth – the ACT's record is strong compare to the performance of all other States and the Northern Territory (ACTPLA, 2003i: 11). On the other hand, the ACT workforce has a higher proportion of highly skilled workers and a history of relatively low unemployment. The ACT enjoys high average incomes and consumptions. 'The average gross household disposable income in the ACT was \$34,300 in 2002-2003; more than 40 per cent higher than the national average' (ACTPLA, 2003i: 11). This strong economy relies heavily on activities generated by Commonwealth Government, particularly the Defence activities.

The high dependence on the public sector for economic stability and growth in ACT exposes the economy of the ACT at risk if effective measures are not introduced to widen economic and employment base (ACTPLA, 2003f). The employment location has been central to the historical planning of the ACT and is still important to achieving a stronger and more diverse economic based for the future of the city. Poorly located employment centres can lead to congestion, associated pollution, higher infrastructure costs and higher recurrent costs. Poor location can also affect economic growth. The Table AE 2 indicates the distribution of population, resident workforce and employment by district, highlights the proportion of the population that work in the district with they live (ACTPLA, 2003f: 50).

Now, the ACT Government is supporting to establish further development of businesses in Central Canberra to encourage the building of a diverse and strong economic future of the ACT. In the ACT private sector earnings are gradually increasing and reliance on public sector activities is decreasing. The growth of the sector as the base of the economy means that the locational requirements of firms will become more important. This suggests that private sector location decisions are likely to be more centralising than public sector

locations decisions, possibly challenging the distribution of employment in Canberra. This has been true to Civic Centre, which has always been planned to be the Central Business District, has not achieved its full potential. In recent years, all major new office development has occurred in other locations, not in the Civic. The proposed “Canberra Spatial Plan” addresses these issues to be considered for future planning initiatives in Canberra. On the other hand, the *Economic White Paper* (ACTPLA, 2003g) identifies significant potential for growth in the Canberra economy in a range of sectors. A significant sector remains government related, and the Commonwealth will always be the major driver of employment in Canberra—a situation that, if managed well, can be to the significant advantage of Canberra. The other key remaining sectors identified as having potential for growth include: information technology and e-government services; biotechnology and medical services; defence industries; environment industries; creative industries; personal services; and education exports (ACTPLA, 2003f).

Table AE 2: Distribution of population, workforce and employment by districts

	Population Share (%)	Resident Workers (%)	% of ACT Employment
Belconnen	24.4	27.4	13.7
North Canberra	11.1	11.5	26.1
South Canberra	6.7	9.8	22.6
Woden/Weston	16.0	17.3	13.7
Tuggeranong	25.6	28.2	9.1
Gungahlin	6.9	8.3	3.2
Other	9.2	0.3	11.6

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001)

#### Access to Recreation Facilities and Open Spaces

One of the fundamental elements of the urban forms of the ACT is the open space, which is valued as a creational resource. Taylor (2003: C3) commented that ‘we value our open space because we can get into it. So it is “Doing Space”. But equally and just as important it is “Seeing Space”. The fact that it is there is sufficient to value it. In this sense then it is not just space, but part of the thing we call place, which we inhabit physically and mentally’. Another important aspect of the urban open spaces and areas of hills and ridges, fringing residential areas is the diversity of native and exotic trees including the pine forests. Thus, Canberrans enjoy a high quality open space network, which enable them to participate in sports and other physical activities. Around 65 per cent of males and females within the ACT participated in sport or physical activity during 1999-2000. The ACT had

the highest participation levels in sport or physical activities in Australia to the national average of 55 per cent.

Currently, there is 3,128 hectares of urban open space in the ACT that include parks, playing fields, landscape buffers and community paths. The Territory also has 126,951 hectares of mountains and bushland; 11,091 hectares of river corridors; and 12,977 hectares of hills, ridges and buffer zones (ACTPLA, 2003e).

As the population increases within town centres and Central Canberra the importance of the existing open space network for recreational opportunities close to residential areas is likely to increase.

### *Transportation*

The design of Canberra was based on around the car as the main means of transport, with public transport between the town centres. Currently cars provide the bulk of Canberra residents' accessibility needs (83 per cent of work trips), with use of public transport, walking and cycling for work trips use relatively low (7 per cent, 4 per cent, and 2.3 per cent respectively). Compared with the Australian average for getting to and from work, Canberrans use their cars more, cycle more, walk about the same and use public transport less (ACTPLA, 2003h: 7). *The Draft Sustainable Transport Plan* (ACTPLA, 2003h) predicts that the car in Canberra will continue to be dominant mode of transport, perhaps for a long time. 'With a high quality road system, substantial parking availability and high levels of car ownerships, Canberra enjoys high levels of accessibility. Canberra value this accessibility and it is important in making Canberra an attractive place to live, work, visit, study and do business. It is part of Canberra's competitive advantage as a city' (ACTPLA, 2003h: 7).

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Canberra is recognised as a great planned city. To continue to succeed a dynamic city, the challenges of Canberra's future must be faced and critical choices and decisions made. The revitalization programs in inner city areas created concerns among the community groups and residents. LAPAC as an advisory committee on planning matters to the ACTLA, is playing important roles in providing community input for planning decisions. In planning policy the consideration should be given to the Canberra as nation's capital and home of

Australian Government. Thus, the ACT has an array of unique attributes and assets that include international status as model of urban development; offering an array of recreational opportunities; high educational and labour forces; modern and efficient public infrastructure, in transport, communications, utilities and public services.