



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

2024–2025

EXCERPT FROM MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

No 23

TUESDAY, 24 JUNE 2025

Amendments agreed to.

Question—That the motion, as amended, viz:

“That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
 - (a) Richardson Shops has been left derelict since May 2019 and the last tenant vacated in 2022;
 - (b) two petitions have previously been tabled in the Assembly collectively garnering 1,205 signatures—by Ms Lawder in November 2022, and in May 2024 by Ms Burch with Principal Petitioner and now Member Ms Tough MLA;
 - (c) despite two petitions, the shops have remained vacant contrary to significant community interest and current government policy settings;
 - (d) under Schedule 4(10) of the *Planning Act 2023*, failing to use land for a continuous period of at least one year for the purpose for which the lease over the land is granted constitutes an offence;
 - (e) the site is zoned CZ4 – Local Centre Zone in the Territory Plan 2023, permissible land use under the current Commercial Zones Policy within the CZ4 zone includes: an animal care facility, bulky good retailing, business agency, café, community activity centre, craft workshop, drink establishment, early childhood education and care, health facility, indoor entertainment facility, multi-unit housing, office, produce market, restaurant, shop, take-away food shop, veterinary clinic and veterinary hospital;
 - (f) there are three, undeveloped and unleased ACT Government sites adjacent to the Richardson shops site; and

- (g) in 2020 the ACT Government opened a new playground next to the Richardson shops;
- (2) further notes that:
 - (a) a survey undertaken by the office of Miss Nuttall MLA with 203 respondents from the area found that 95 percent of respondents favoured the shops being redeveloped; and
 - (b) the following percentage of respondents favoured the following uses for the site:
 - (i) 82 percent: commercial property;
 - (ii) 38 percent: community group centres;
 - (iii) 37 percent: community services; and
 - (iv) 35 percent: shop-top housing;
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) negotiate with the owner to ensure appropriate use of the Richardson Shops site aligned with community desires by 31 December 2025;
 - (b) investigate why the shops were left empty for three years and how similar situations could be avoided;
 - (c) review the process for issuing and renewing crown leases, including purpose and withdrawal clause requirements, to safeguard against properties left vacant for a year or more;
 - (d) investigate tougher measures for property owners who leave their shop spaces vacant or unused, such as:
 - (i) stronger enforcement of existing compliance mechanisms (such as Schedule 4(10) of the *Planning Act 2023*);
 - (ii) an additional levy on vacant retail properties;
 - (iii) provision to add withdrawal clauses to Crown Leases should they be left vacant for more than one year;
 - (iv) provision of subsidised community space; and
 - (v) other changes to the Planning Act to disincentive shop squatting;
 - (e) review planning controls around the Richardson local centre including opportunities to encourage mixed-use development such as 'shop-top' housing;
 - (f) release the undeveloped, unleased sites to the north of the Richardson shops site to support the broader redevelopment of the local centre;
 - (g) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting week of 2025, and every six months thereafter until a tenant has been found, on the above measures and:
 - (i) verify whether Richardson Shops has – or will shortly have – a tenant that meets community need; and
 - (ii) if a tenant has not been found, take action to enforce compliance with Schedule 4(10) of the *Planning Act 2023*; and
- (4) calls on the owners of the Richardson Shops site to:

- (a) proactively and constructively engage with the local Richardson community on the community need for the Richardson Shops site;
- (b) work collaboratively with the ACT Government to find a solution that prioritises the Richardson community's vision for the site; and
- (c) comply with Schedule 4(10) of the *Planning Act 2023* and arrange for the site to be used in line with the lease purpose clause and community expectations as soon as possible but by no later than 31st December 2025." —

be agreed to—put and passed.