

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

October 2021

Molonglo Group Centre

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

The planned Molonglo Group Centre will be the major retail and commercial centre for the Molonglo Valley.

The Commercial Centre will provide Molonglo Valley residents with much-needed shopping facilities including large-scale supermarkets, retail and commercial businesses, emergency services and other community facilities such as education facilities, an art centre and a library.

The first step towards development of the Molonglo Commercial Centre is the release of land by the ACT Government. This was anticipated to occur in 2021-22.

The ACT Government's 2021-22 Budget, handed down this week, has announced a delay to the release of those first parcels of land. The land is now set for release in 2023-24.

While residents of Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek are disappointed by the delay – and I share that disappointment. But we want to get this right.

The Molonglo Valley community has stated the need for strong placemaking outcomes in various projects across the region, and the ACT Government has agreed that this is an important principle for the Molonglo Group Centre. Unfortunately, this results in changes to some of the planning work and community consultation that needs to be done.

What it means is that refinement – and, therefore, time – is needed for further strategic planning and community consultation.

If land were to be released this year, as originally intended, it would be a piecemeal approach with individual blocks released. This would not provide good place-making outcomes. A holistic approach is needed to provide coordinated development and delivery that meets the community's needs well into the future.

While I reiterate that I understand the community's frustration and dismay about the delayed timeframes, I am confident that the end result will be a positive one for our community.

It is intended that further land releases will occur for the broader Molonglo Group Centre in 2024-25 and again in 2025-26, including a further 10,000 square metres of commercial land and additional residential dwellings.

For too long, we have all seen the impact of the lack of suitable shops in the Molonglo Valley. The pressure this has placed on services and facilities in Weston Creek, at Cooleman Court in particular, is of ongoing concern for Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley residents.

Local shopping centres do much more than just provide a point of convenience and services – they are often the heart and hub of the community; a place to meet, a place of social connection and cohesion.

It is great to see the IGA and other shops and businesses up and running in Denman Prospect.

Construction has recently commenced on the private Koko development in the Molonglo Valley, which is anticipated to house a mid-sized, or 'metro' Woolworths supermarket, of 1,500 square metres. This has been approved through development processes and it is anticipated that it will open in late 2022.

The building has literally just popped out of the ground in the last couple of weeks, and it is an encouraging sight to see!

There is a second development application for the same site, currently awaiting approval, that would include a second supermarket.

As part of the ACT Government's 2021-22 Budget commitment, land release to enable local shop development of Whitlam is planned for this financial year. This would mean shops at Whitlam could open around 2023.

In the interim, the Suburban Land Agency has established the 'Heartbeat' café in Whitlam to provide early residents with access to local facilities, and in recognition of the importance of a meeting and gathering place for new residents in their new suburb.

This means that within the next few years, Molonglo Valley will be better served by shops and services while we work closely with the community to develop the plans for the Group Centre.

I remain committed to ensuring adequate and appropriate shopping facilities for the people in my community – the residents of Murrumbidgee.

I will continue to be a strong advocate and to do everything within my ability to ensure a favourable outcome.

I will remain engaged in the various aspects of the Group Centre's planning, community consultation, land release and subsequent delivery to ensure the best possible outcome for my community.

In particular I will ensure that community consultation is undertaken in a meaningful way, and that community voices are heard and incorporated in the final design and development outcomes for the Molonglo Group Centre.

I want to reassure residents of Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek that I am doing everything I can to achieve a successful outcome on the prompt delivery of quality shopping facilities, commercial services and community facilities in the Molonglo Valley.

I would like to thank Minister Gentleman for his continued commitment to land use and planning outcomes in the Molonglo Valley, and for the community.

I will continue working with colleagues, stakeholders and community members until this is resolved, and into the future.

Thank you.