

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

3 August 2021

Molonglo Valley Community Council – democracy in action

Thank you, Chief Minister.

And I wish to congratulate you on making the Molonglo Valley Community Council a reality.

Colleagues, most of you will remember that the first motion I moved in this Assembly, in February this year, was to call on the ACT Government to support the establishment of a Community Council for the Molonglo Valley.

I moved this motion following requests from passionate and inspired community residents. These individuals were already leading change and building a strong sense of community in Molonglo. They recognised that the area had unique needs, distinct from other areas across Canberra, and needed its own level of representation.

Molonglo Valley is the ACTs newest greenfield development and fastest growing suburban area.

Residents of Molonglo Valley sought positive, constructive solutions and worked with myself as an elected representative, and with the ACT Government to work out how to best represent and benefit their community, now and into the future.

I am so pleased to have been a part of that journey to date and I look forward to continuing to support the group and the community as it continues to evolve.

The establishment of the Molonglo Valley Community Council is a great example of democracy in action – whereby community members came forward, presented an idea to government, tri-partisan support was provided, and the community, ACT Government staff and elected members here in the Assembly worked together to make it happen.

Examples like this demonstrate the difference and impact members of our community can have in helping shape their future, and that of their friends, relatives and neighbourhood, now and into the future.

I want all members of the ACT community to never underestimate the power or opportunity they have as democratic citizens; and by working collaboratively and constructively with elected members and the ACT Government.

Across the ACT, Community Councils are a great way for residents to get involved in what's happening in their area and to advocate to government to shape positive future outcomes.

Across the ACT there are now eight Community Councils. These groups operate as non-political, not-for-profit organisations, representing a broad range of interests and needs of their local community.

The Community Councils often feed back to the ACT Government on issues affecting planning, traffic and transport, community safety, and the environment, among other matters.

Most Community Councils meet monthly to discuss matters important to them, and to receive presentations on specific topics of relevance. The meetings are open to all residents and anyone can participate by attending meetings, staying up to date and providing comment and input through Facebook pages, websites, newsletters and other communication channels.

The more diverse the range of community members participating in Community Councils, the stronger the outcomes that can be achieved and reflect the diversity of our community, through the views put forward to government.

In establishing the Molonglo Valley Community Council, the ACT Government has sought to ensure diverse membership that is reflective and inclusive of the area's broad population and demographic by encouraging the Council to explore innovative engagement methods.

I have seen that this is already occurring, and I commend the group – in its less formal role as the Molonglo Valley Community Forum – in engaging with students of the local school to provide a welcome and introduction at each meeting. What a great way to involve, inspire and empower future community leaders!

In attending each of the group's meetings already this year, I have been impressed with the range of issues discussed, the diversity of guest presenters invited to present at meetings, and the energy and passion of residents wanting to help shape the future of the area.

I understand that the election for positions on the Molonglo Valley Community Council will be held in October, and I encourage local residents to nominate; and to attend the meeting to have their say and get involved.

I want to stress the importance of the Molonglo Valley residents' engagement with the census. The next census is Tuesday 10 August. Census helps government, business and not for profit organisations to make important decisions.

The results from this year's census, coming up in just a couple of weeks' time, will provide valuable information across the ACT; and especially for areas like the Molonglo Valley which has changed and grown so much since the last census, in 2016.

The information obtained this year will help us to work with to further identify the needs of the growing community and to anticipate and plan for future trends.

In closing, I'd like to acknowledge the Weston Creek Community Council, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Molonglo Valley Community Council.

Thank you.