

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development DirectorateACEPDcustomerservices@act.gov.au**Development Application no. 202443325**

Advocacy for Inclusion would like to provide feedback on the referenced development application for 1, 3, 5 Irving Street, Phillip which has been a matter of significant interest and public comment.

About us

Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) is an independent organisation delivering reputable national systemic advocacy informed by our experience in individual advocacy and community and government consultation. We provide dedicated individual and self-advocacy services, training, information and resources in the ACT.

As a Disabled People's Organisation, the majority of our organisation, including our Board of Management, staff and members, are people with disabilities. AFI speaks with the authority of lived experience. It is strongly committed to advancing opportunities for the insights, experiences and opinions of people with disabilities to be heard and acknowledged.

AFI operates under a human rights framework. We uphold the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and strive to promote and advance the human rights and inclusion of people with disabilities in the community. AFI is a declared public authority under the Human Rights Act 2004.

Comment

AFI do not generally comment on individual development applications and we not have a view about the proposed residential towers or other aspects of the development but we do have a view about ensuring there are modern accessible swimming pools which are used by people with disability to maintain health and mobility and have acquired the character of a public asset (and which provide wellbeing infrastructure as foundational disability supports). Public aquatic facilities are not merely recreational spaces – they are essential for promoting physical health, mental well-being, and social inclusion for all, particularly people with disability.

For many people with disability, hydrotherapy is not a luxury but a necessity. The buoyancy of water reduces joint stress, allowing for safe, pain-free movement and exercise. Warm water immersion helps manage pain, improves circulation, and supports mobility. There are therapeutic benefits that are often not possible through traditional exercise.

Beyond physical benefits, these sessions provide meaningful opportunities for social interaction, mental wellness, and building confidence, particularly for those at risk of isolation.

We note that the Phillip Swimming and Ice Skating Centre has garnered widespread community support, including a petition with over 5,600 signatures opposing its closure. We also note that the space needs modernising and improvement.

We strongly advocate for:

- Modernising and upgrading a public pool in Phillip to enhance its accessibility and expand its community services, including better and equivalent front access and disability parking
- Embedding accessible, inclusive facilities as a non-negotiable element of urban development (our view is that a social planning approach is required to ensure a minimum footprint of shared accessible community assets in each region of Canberra).
- Engaging with affected community members in future planning decisions, particularly those who face the greatest barriers to participation elsewhere.