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Media release

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Canberrans want ZPG for the ACT: New poll

Almost three quarters of Canberrans believe the city is big enough or too big already, according to an Australia Institute report launched today by the Chief Minister Jon Stanhope.

The Institute commissioned ORIMA Research to conduct an opinion survey of 350 households at the end of April and beginning of May 2005.

“The development lobby has always had an undue influence on Canberra’s planning. It wants endless expansion, but now we know that most Canberrans would prefer zero population growth”, said Institute Executive Director Dr Clive Hamilton.

Residents of Belconnen (82%) are the most likely to oppose an increase in Canberra’s population, while those in South Canberra (63%) are the least likely.

Six in ten residents believe that the quality of life would be harmed if the city grew to 500,000.

When asked how the quality of life would be harmed with a larger population, 78% nominated worsening environmental problems like water shortages and pollution, and 53% nominated increased traffic congestion.

“Discussions about Canberra’s size and identity are frequently based on a belief that the city is somehow incomplete or inadequate”, said Dr Hamilton. “Pervasive stereotypes about the paucity of cultural and community life in Canberra play to the prejudices of outside observers. But most Canberrans love the city just as it is.”

Women and older residents are more likely to believe that the city is big enough already and that the quality of life would deteriorate if the population were substantially larger.

“The new survey poses the question of whether the future of the city is to reflect the wishes of the citizens of Canberra or the financial interests of the development lobby.”

The report may be read under What’s New on the Australia Institute’s website.