
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Commonwealth approvals for ACT light rail

**Commonwealth and Parliamentary approvals for the proposed
Stage 2 of the Australian Capital Territory light rail project**

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories

October 2018
Canberra

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Contents

Foreword	vii
List of recommendations	ix
Membership of the Committee	xi
Terms of reference	xiii
List of abbreviations	xiv

REPORT

1 Introduction	1
Light rail in the Australian Capital Territory	1
Conduct of the inquiry	3
Structure of the report	4
Scope of the inquiry	4
2 Commonwealth jurisdiction and approval processes	5
National Capital Plan	5
Central National Area	7
Rapid public transit in the Plan	7
Parliamentary Zone	10
Parliamentary Precincts	11
Parliament House Vista	12
Commonwealth approval processes	13
Department of the Environment and Energy	13
National Capital Authority	15

Commonwealth Parliament	18
Works Approval.....	19
Committee comment.....	21
3 Light rail stage 2.....	23
Route.....	23
Consistency with the National Capital Plan.....	27
Rapid-transport spine.....	28
Commonwealth Avenue Bridge.....	31
Impact on traffic congestion	32
Alternative routes.....	33
Constitution Avenue, Russell, Kings Avenue	36
Committee comment.....	42
4 Heritage.....	45
Consultation to date	45
ACT Government	45
National Capital Authority.....	46
Heritage concerns.....	47
Detailed heritage assessment.....	47
Overhead wires and poles	51
Appearance of light rail stops, signs and landscaping.....	54
Weston plantings.....	55
Committee comment.....	57
Appendix A: List of Submissions.....	61
Submissions.....	61
Appendix B: List of Exhibits.....	65
Exhibits.....	65

Appendix C: List of public hearings and witnesses	67
Thursday, 21 June 2018 – Canberra, ACT.....	67
Thursday, 28 June 2018 – Canberra, ACT.....	68
Thursday, 16 August 2018 – Canberra, ACT.....	68

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Light rail traffic modelling summary (2026, with and without light rail)	33
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Indicative Canberra light rail network.....	2
Figure 2.1	Precincts of the Central National Area.....	8
Figure 2.2	National Capital Plan, General Policy Plan—Metropolitan Canberra.....	9
Figure 2.3	Parliamentary Zone	10
Figure 2.4	Parliamentary Precincts.....	11
Figure 2.5	Parliament House Vista	12
Figure 2.6	Commonwealth approval processes.....	20
Figure 3.1	Proposed City to Woden light rail alignment	26
Figure 3.2	National Capital Plan, excerpt showing indicative route for inter-town public transport system relevant to light rail stage 2	27
Figure 3.3	Direct route via Capital Circle Spine	34
Figure 3.4	Capital Circle Spine + new Canberra Avenue line to Manuka Oval.....	35
Figure 3.5	Capital Circle spine + branch line to Kingston	35
Figure 3.6	Possible alternative light rail routes	38
Figure 3.7	Light rail network design, showing primary north-south (red) and east-west (blue) spines that intersect around City Hill.	39
Figure 3.8	Comparison of Stage 2 Commonwealth Avenue Lake Crossing and Kings Avenue Lake Crossing	41
Figure 4.1	Identified heritage items located near the light rail corridor.....	50
Figure 4.2	Overhead line power and wire-free running locations.....	53



Foreword

Canberra is the Commonwealth seat of government and the national capital of Australia. It is home to Australia's principal governmental, judicial, cultural, scientific, educational, and military institutions and holds special meaning not only for its residents, but for all Australians. The Commonwealth and this committee have a responsibility to safeguard this character and heritage.

It is the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government's responsibility to improve Canberra's public transport network for residents and visitors. However, progress must never be prioritised over the protection of the nation's most significant areas, institutions, and buildings. The development of light rail amenity must not come at the cost of the long-term character and heritage of the National Capital Area and the Parliamentary Zone.

The Light Rail Stage 2 project passes through and adjacent to a number of key cultural and heritage sites and, like all projects and proposals in these areas, must be consistent with the legal requirements imposed by the National Capital Plan. However, throughout the inquiry, we have become increasingly concerned that elements of the route alignment proposed by the ACT Government are not consistent with the Plan.

The ACT Government has presented arguments regarding the potential benefits offered by the proposed route alignment through the Parliamentary Zone. Nonetheless, we do not believe that those elements of the alignment that are found to be inconsistent with the National Capital Plan will be approved by the Commonwealth.

Therefore, we urge the National Capital Authority and the ACT Government to continue to work together to ensure that the proposed alignment for the project is consistent with the National Capital Plan. This may require the proposed route alignment to be revised to better reflect the routes outlined in the National Capital Plan. Alternatively, we understand that the ACT Government may need to work with the Commonwealth to amend the National Capital Plan.

We commend the ACT Government for its proactive approach in seeking guidance and advice, from both pre-application discussions with the National

Capital Authority and throughout this inquiry process. It is important to ensure that a proposed route alignment is feasible before committing the considerable funding required to develop detailed designs and Environmental Impact Statements.

We thank the ACT Government, the National Capital Authority, and all those who participated in the inquiry, for their assistance.

Mr Ben Morton MP
Chair



List of recommendations

2 Commonwealth jurisdiction and approval processes

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Minister responsible for territories refer any Works Approval application or any amendment to the National Capital Plan relating to the light rail project to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories for inquiry, prior to its tabling in the Parliament.

3 Light rail stage 2

Recommendation 2

In the event that the ACT Government chooses to pursue a route alignment that is only partially consistent with the National Capital Plan, the committee recommends that there be a two-stage process for seeking Commonwealth approval:

- Stage 1: the ACT Government works with the National Capital Authority to ensure Commonwealth approval of the route alignment, by way of amendment to the National Capital Plan; and
- Stage 2: completion of Works Approval application and other Commonwealth approval processes.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the National Capital Authority require any light rail bridge design on either the Commonwealth or Kings Avenue bridges to:

- be of equal quality to that of the existing bridges;
- have the same column spacing as the existing bridges;
- not reduce existing lake to underside of bridge clearances;
- be slimmer than the existing bridges so as not to visually impact on the existing two bridges; and
- have no impact on the structural soundness of the existing bridges.

4 Heritage

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that the Parliament require any light rail on, or crossing:

- Commonwealth Avenue;
- Kings Avenue;
- State Circle;
- Brisbane Avenue;
- Sydney Avenue;
- Canberra Avenue (to Manuka Circle);
- Hobart Avenue;
- Melbourne Avenue;
- Adelaide Avenue (to Kent Street);


and in the Parliamentary Zone, be wire-free.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that Parliament require the placement and appearance of light rail stops, landscaping, and signage to be unobtrusive and complementary to the heritage value of nearby buildings, views of Parliament, and the character of the Central National Area and Parliamentary Zone.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that Parliament require that the removal of any trees with heritage value, such as the Weston plantings, be met with an appropriate replanting and landscaping strategy that maintains heritage values in the Central National Area and the Parliamentary Zone.



Membership of the Committee

Chair Mr Ben Morton MP

Deputy Chair Ms Gai Brodtmann MP

Members Mr Kevin Hogan MP

Mr Julian Leeser MP

Hon Sussan Ley MP (to 28/8/18)

Hon Warren Snowdon MP

Hon Dr John McVeigh MP (from 10/9/2018)

Senator Jonathon Duniam

Senator Sue Lines

Senator Malarndirri McCarthy

Senator James Paterson

Senator Lee Rhiannon (to 15/8/18)

Senator David Smith (from 28/6/2018)

Senator Mehreen Faruqi
(from 13/9/2018)

Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Ms Shennia Spillane Ms Peggy Danaee
Inquiry Secretary	Ms Casey Mazarella
Administrative Officer	Ms Kathleen Blunden



Terms of reference

The Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories will inquire into and report on the development of stage two of the Australian Capital Territory light rail project, with regard to:

1. the relevant parliamentary approval processes for works within the Parliamentary zone;
2. the roles of the National Capital Authority and the Australian Government, and the associated approval processes;
3. possible impacts on the Parliamentary zone and Parliamentary precincts, including any impacts on the heritage values and national importance of the Parliamentary zone and our national capital;
4. the identification of matters that may be of concern prior to formal parliamentary or Australian Government consideration of the project; and
5. any other relevant matter the Committee wishes to examine.



List of abbreviations

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIA	Australian Institute of Architects
ARA	Australian Railway Association
Cth	Commonwealth
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
Environment	Department of the Environment and Energy
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
LRS1	Light Rail Stage 1
LRS2	Light Rail Stage 2
Minister for the Environment	Australian Government Minister for the Environment
MoAD	Museum of Australian Democracy (at Old Parliament House)
NCA	National Capital Authority
Parliament	Commonwealth Parliament
Parliament Act	<i>Parliament Act 1974</i>
PIA	Planning Institute of Australia
PPP	Public Private Partnership

The Plan

National Capital Plan

