

National Capital Authority

Answers to Questions on Notice from the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories – October 2020

1. *Who are the current owners of the land in North Curtin that the National Capital Authority wishes to earmark for embassies and official residents?*
 - a. *If it is crown land – is that crown land vested in the ACT Government or the Commonwealth?*

The land proposed for diplomatic uses (Block 4 Section 106 and part Block 5 Section 121 Curtin) is National Land managed by the National Capital Authority for the special purposes of the National Capital.

The NCA acquired land management responsibility for the site in March 2020 following a land transfer agreement between the Australian and ACT Governments. The agreement resulted in:

- a. The transfer of Block 4 Section 106 and part Block 5 Section 121 Curtin from being land managed by the ACT Government, to land managed by the NCA for the special purposes of the National Capital (and new diplomatic estate).
- b. The transfer of a portion of the bed of Lake Burley Griffin from land being managed by the NCA for the special purposes of the National Capital, to land managed by the ACT Government.

The land transfer agreement was given effect by the publication of gazettals on the Federal Register of Legislation on 23 March 2020.

2. *How long has it been the National Capital Authority's intention to develop the site in North Curtin for official residents and embassies?*

In 2007, the NCA commissioned GHD to investigate potential sites for diplomatic use. This work was completed in 2008 and GHD presented the NCA with a report titled 'Report for Diplomatic Land Supply: Opportunities and Constraints'. Twelve sites were analysed for their suitability for diplomatic use.

The GHD report identified the North Curtin Horse Paddocks (Block 5 Section 121 Curtin) as the optimal location for a new diplomatic estate.

In March 2013, the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories tabled their report concerning their inquiry into the allocation of land to diplomatic missions in the ACT, titled 'An estate for the future'. The Committee's report, and the NCA's submission to the inquiry, identified the GHD work and potential for the use of North Curtin Horse Paddocks for diplomatic use.

3. *What is the timeframe for developing the site?*

The NCA has entered into a licence with Territory Agistment to continue to operate Block 5 Section 121 Curtin as a horse agistment paddock for at least the

next two years. While the development of further diplomatic land is a priority, the NCA does not foresee any changes to the current day-to-day agistment arrangements for the next two years as there are many steps involved in planning the nature of the diplomatic precinct.

If the National Capital Plan amendment process is completed successfully, the NCA will need to undertake detailed planning investigations and estate development planning for the diplomatic portion of the site. Relevant approvals, including planning and environmental, will be needed before any construction commences.

4. *Who initiated the proposal to develop the area of North Curtin and the development of additional residential premises in West Basin? Was it the National Capital Authority or the ACT Government?*

The land transfer agreement between the Australian and ACT Governments was undertaken with the intent of facilitating the development of a new diplomatic estate on the North Curtin Horse Paddocks. The land transfer also facilitates further development forming part of the ACT Government's Acton Waterfront Project at West Basin.

In 2004, the NCA published the 'Griffin Legacy', a framework for the future development of the central areas of Canberra. A series of amendments to the National Capital Plan were made to give statutory effect to key propositions of the Griffin Legacy. In November 2006, Amendment 61 to the National Capital Plan was approved, and set out a framework of land uses and planning and urban design policies to guide future development in the West Basin area.

Land at West Basin is unleased land managed by the ACT Government. The ACT Government (or any subsequent lessee) may develop land at West Basin in accordance with the planning framework provided for by National Capital Plan.