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STAGE TWO OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY LIGHT RAIL TO WODEN PROJECT

The Griffith Narrabundah Community Association (GNCA), which has over 300 members, welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Standing Committee's inquiry on the proposed second stage of the ACT Government's light rail project.

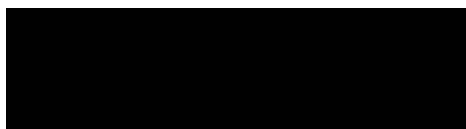
The lack of specific information provided publicly to date by the ACT Government makes specific comment difficult, if not nugatory. The comments below are submitted in the hope that the inquiry will be able to shed more light on the practical implications of the ACT Government's proposal.

- Neither the ACT Government nor the Australian Parliament should be party to a policy or project that is based on little more than a 'feel good' approach to public transport that was concocted at the last minute during an election campaign.
- All we know at present is that Stage 2 of the light rail project from Civic to Woden will result in slower travel times between these two centres, cost over \$1 billion and cause more traffic congestion on Commonwealth Avenue Bridge.
- The Standing Committee should give serious consideration to recommending to Parliament that the ACT Government's proposal for light rail to enter the heart of the Parliamentary zone should be rejected until the ACT Government provides a full business case that includes a rigorous social cost-benefit analysis.
- Any business case provided by the ACT Government should include a traffic flow analysis based on an up-to-date origin-destination matrix to allow assessment of the feasibility of traffic finding alternative routes to avoid the congestion that will inevitably be caused by trams crossing Commonwealth Avenue to enter or exit the Parliamentary zone. Knowledge of travellers' origins and destinations is essential for estimating additional travel times if alternative routes are taken.
- It would be prudent to wait until Stage One is in operation and it is possible to evaluate whether the claimed benefits, whatever they may be, justify the expenditure and the disruption that has been caused during construction. The construction of the tramway to Gunghalin has caused a great deal of disruption over an extended period. The Committee should take into account the likely need for road and junction closures

in the Parliamentary Zone for two to three years, which are likely to affect Members and their staff travelling to and from Parliament House on Parliamentary business.

- The GNCA lacks sufficient expertise to express its concerns about heritage values in the language of landscape architects and town planners. However, it is clear to most Canberrans that the Parliamentary zone is special in that it offers an oasis of large open spaces and vistas that are enjoyed by visitors and local workers, with Canberra's through traffic passing by on its boundaries over the Commonwealth and Kings avenues. Diversion of significant traffic flows into this zone, the rattle of trams and the clutter of any overhead wiring would detract from the zone's unique ambience. The existing sense of open space and quiet contemplation – so reminiscent of the empty landscape during the opening of the original Parliament House – would be lost forever.
- It is to be hoped that the Standing Committee will not limit itself to considering potential effects on the Parliamentary zone on the assumption that the current state of the broader landscape will remain fixed in the future. The ACT Government and the National Capital Authority have already raised the possibility of constructing buildings along Commonwealth Avenue, and reducing lanes available to motor vehicles. Unless other planned developments are taken into account, no realistic assessment can be made of the effect of light rail on the Parliamentary zone.
- The ACT Government has now announced that a number of direct bus services from the northern suburbs into Civic will be discontinued, forcing passengers to change onto the tram at Dickson, thus lengthening their journey times and reducing the utility of using public transport. The Committee should take into account any plans for a reduction in direct bus services from Woden Valley, Weston Creek and Tuggeranong to both Civic and the Parliamentary zone which would have a similarly adverse effect on workers travelling into the zone from the South.
- Commonwealth Avenue already carries about 67,000 vehicles per day. More buildings, and impeded traffic flow are likely to see traffic banking up at peak periods well southwards of Parliament House. Introduction of light rail into the mix is likely to compound congestion at intersections like Commonwealth Avenue and Coronation Drive, and may even affect ease of entry up the northern ramp to Parliament House. The Standing Committee should take a more holistic, longer-term perspective, rather than focussing solely on the Parliamentary zone bounded by the Commonwealth and Kings avenues.

Yours sincerely,



Leo Dobes
President
13 June 2018