



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and
External Territories report:

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

MARCH 2019

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.

Agreed. The Australian Government recognises the potential impact of this project on the Central National Area and supports the ongoing scrutiny of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories.

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.*

Agreed. The Australian Government notes that the National Capital Authority, through the National Capital Plan, has previously identified options for inter-town public transport routes through the Central National Area.

This recommendation captures approvals like those under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) which are separate processes and not inter-dependent. The National Capital Authority does not grant works approval until such time as all EPBC matters are resolved to ensure its decision is consistent with the EPBC Act.

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.*

Agreed. Noting the final design of any new structure must be agreed by the National Capital Authority, and will potentially be subject to a heritage impact assessment by the Department of Environment and Energy, the Australian Government agrees that the design of any new structure must not impact on the existing bridges.

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.

Agreed in principle. The Australian Government supports the recommendation, subject to further information about the viability of a wire-free route. The Australian Government notes that this recommendation is intended to conserve the heritage and character of the Central National Area and Parliamentary Zone.

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.

Agreed in principle. This recommendation is intended to conserve the heritage and 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.

Agreed in principle. Without restricting future change, the Australian Government agrees that the landscape setting of the Central National Area must be preserved. The Government notes that any changes to the landscape must be agreed by the Australian Parliament and the National Capital Authority, and will be subject to a heritage impact assessment.