



BRIDGING OF KINGS AVENUE OVER PARKES WAY
AT THE RUSSELL ROUNDABOUT, CANBERRA, A.C.T.

**Submission to the
Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Public Works**

22 July 2008

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This Submission was prepared by Professor James Weirick on behalf of the Management Committee of the Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. and complements the separate submission by the Canberra Chapter of the Society, dated 20 June 2008.

Summary of Recommendations

This analysis of the proposed Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass at the Russell roundabout, Canberra ACT concludes that the stated purpose of the work is poorly conceived, poorly argued and (as publicly presented to date) poorly supported with technical data; the work is extravagant, unnecessary and counter-productive; its revenue producing capacity, as publicly-subsidised infrastructure in a major urban development, is non-existent; and its prospective public value is zero.

The submission makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 (para 2.5)

Prior to the Public Hearings before the Public Works Committee on the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way Overpass, all background studies listed by the National Capital Authority in its Statement of Evidence, and other relevant technical reports, should be made publicly available.

Recommendation 2 (para 3.30)

To avoid unnecessary confusion between the original Griffin Plan for Canberra and the redevelopment plans promoted by the NCA, the term 'Griffin Legacy' should not be used, and a more accurate descriptor, 'Central National Area redevelopment' be adopted for the NCA's planning initiatives.

Recommendation 3 (para 6.13)

The current program of traffic light installation on the Civic-Canberra Airport transport corridor makes the \$26.6 million Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass an extravagant, unnecessary and counter-productive proposal. The project should not proceed.

Recommendation 4 (para 6.14)

The way forward is to reconceptualise Parkes Way as a tree-lined boulevard, which either retains the Russell roundabout with reduced complexity or replaces it with a simple 4-way intersection controlled by traffic lights.

Recommendation 5 (para 6.15)

The NCA and ACT Government should work together to extend the urban boulevard concept the length of the Civic-Canberra Airport transport corridor, so this all-important approach route to the Central National Area becomes a simple, elegant avenue consistent in its design speed, design quality and spatial character.

Recommendation 6 (para 6.31)

Instead of freeway-standard construction in the Central National Area, the NCA in association with the ACT Government should introduce Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology so that Canberra – a city of a mere 340,000 people – can make more efficient use of its existing road network.

Recommendation 7 (para 7.29)

The Rudd Government decision to cut the Constitution Avenue upgrade and fund the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass should be reversed; the overpass should be cut and the Constitution Avenue upgrade funded.

Recommendation 8 (para 7.30)

In terms of economic cost and cost recovery, the benefits of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass as a work of urban infrastructure are non-existent; the economic benefits of the Constitution Avenue upgrade are worthy of rigorous analysis, based on development of appropriate scale.

Recommendation 9 (para 8.17)

Constitution Avenue and Parkes Way should be redesigned and rebuilt as equivalent urban boulevards to calm and distribute traffic through urban blocks formed by a network of avenues and cross streets.

Recommendation 10 (para 8.18)

Constitution Avenue should be widened to a double carriageway with a cross-section, which would permit the insertion of Light Rail in a dedicated, tree-lined median.

1.0 The Changing Policy Setting of the Inquiry

- 1.1 The Walter Burley Griffin Society (WBGs) thanks the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for the opportunity to comment on the proposal to bridge Kings Avenue over Parkes Way at the Russell Roundabout, Canberra, ACT.
- 1.2 This submission, prepared on behalf of the Sydney-based Management Committee of the WBGs, is separate from but complements the submission by the Canberra Chapter of the Society, dated 20 June 2008.
- 1.3 The submission has been prepared in response to the changing policy setting of the Inquiry.
- 1.4 Four political announcements have been made since the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass was referred to the Public Works Committee on 19 March 2008, which bear upon the proposal in significant ways:
 - on 23 June 2008, the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Bob Debus announced that the future of the project to widen Constitution Avenue, cancelled in February 2008, was being negotiated by the ACT and Federal Governments, and a solution ‘could be imminent’¹
 - on 9 July 2008, the Chief Minister of the ACT, Jon Stanhope announced that a Light Rail system linking Civic to the Airport, Parliamentary Triangle and major town centres, had been listed as top priority in the Territory’s application for infrastructure funding under the Federal Government’s Building Australia Fund²
 - on 16 July 2008, Senator Kate Lundy, Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories, released the Committee’s report into the role of the National Capital Authority with recommendations which included preparation of a joint Commonwealth/Territory Sustainable Transport Plan; and a statement which encouraged the Commonwealth Government to reinstate funding for the widening of Constitution Avenue³

¹ James Massola, ‘Debus hopes for consensus on Constitution Avenue,’ *Canberra Times*, 24 June 2008.

² Jon Stanhope, ‘Stanhope lists Light Rail as ACT priority from Commonwealth infrastructure funding,’ Media Release, 9 July 2008, <http://www.chiefminister.act.gov.au/media.php?v=7115> - accessed 17.07.08

³Parliament of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories, *The Way Forward: inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority*, Canberra, July 2008, (hereafter, NCET, *The Way Forward*), Recommendation 13, p.125; Chapter 4, p.47; Section 9.23, p.117.

- on 16 July 2008, the Minister for Climate Change, Senator the Hon. Penny Wong released the Rudd Government's *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper*, which among its recommendations, addressed the issue of transport sector carbon emissions with a fuel pricing policy aimed to 'create incentives to change patterns of fuel use and, over time . . . influence the decisions that consumers make about the vehicles they purchase as well as where to live and work.'⁴
- 1.5 The Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is not an isolated project. The proposal was initiated by the National Capital Authority as part of an integrated package with the widening of Constitution Avenue.⁵ When the latter was cut from the works program by the Rudd Government in February 2008,⁶ the NCA was left without separate data to establish the need for the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass. This issue is further discussed in Section 4.0 (below).
- 1.6 The state of indecision over the project to widen Constitution Avenue, indicated by recent political announcements, should not confuse the issue: widening Constitution Avenue is a good idea; the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is a bad idea.
- 1.7 As discussed in Section 8.0 (below), the WBGs considers that the two projects should never have been linked in the first place.
- 1.8 The projects should remain separate and the funding decision reversed: the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass should be cut; the widening of Constitution Avenue should proceed.
- 1.9 The decision by the Rudd Government to cut funding for Constitution Avenue has done the nation a great service by forcing consideration of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass on its own, making clear its extravagance and folly.
- 1.10 The political announcements concerning Light Rail and the need for an integrated Commonwealth/Territory Sustainable Transport Plan highlight the fact that the proposed Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is linked to the larger issue of Canberra's metropolitan planning and transport future in an era of climate change and peak oil.

⁴ Department of Climate Change, *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper*, Canberra, July 2008, pp.99-100.

⁵ The Hon. Jim Lloyd, Minister for Local Government, Territories & Roads, 'Canberra's Roads: building the Griffin Legacy,' Media Release, 8 May 2007.

⁶ The Hon. Lindsay Tanner, Minister for Finance & Deregulation, 'Government details initial round of savings measures to assist inflation fight,' Media Release, 6 February 2008; John Thistleton, 'Funding cuts put city plans on hold, *Canberra Times*, 7 April 2008.

- 1.11 The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme foreshadowed by the Rudd Government in its July 2008 Green Paper will include a fuel pricing policy to change the national vehicle fleet to more efficient use of fuel, and to change where people choose to live and work.
- 1.12 This policy will have significant implications for a car-reliant city, such as Canberra – it calls into question the costs and benefits of extravagant capital works aimed at increasing the use of private motor vehicles.
- 1.13 The following assessment of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass follows the Terms of the Reference, set out in Part III Section 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, which require the Committee to have regard to –
- (a) the stated purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - (b) the necessity for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - (c) the most effective use that can be made, in the carrying out of the work, of the moneys to be expended on the work;
 - (d) where the work purports to be of a revenue-producing character, the amount of revenue that it may reasonably be expected to produce; and
 - (e) the present and prospective public value of the work.

2.0 The Proposed Work – Kings Avenue/Parkes Way Overpass

- 2.1 This submission is based on the description of the proposed work contained in the Statement of Evidence to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Public Works prepared by the National Capital Authority (NCA), dated March 2008.⁷
- 2.2 The proposal involves construction of a grade-separated intersection at Kings Avenue and Parkes Way, Canberra ACT to replace the existing roundabout at this location.
- 2.3 Approximately 500m of the east-west motorway (Parkes Way/Morshead Drive) will be excavated to pass under Kings Avenue, which will be maintained at its current level on a new reinforced concrete bridge, and connected to the east-west motorway by 'on' and 'off' ramps.
- 2.4 At the Kings Avenue level, the new bridge will incorporate a single point urban interchange controlled by traffic lights. The NCA states that the traffic lights will control right turning traffic and Give Way signs will 'generally' control left turning traffic.⁸
- 2.5 However, the project includes signalised pedestrian crossings on Kings Avenue for access to the foreshore parklands of Lake Burley Griffin (Grevillea Park on the east; Kings Park on the west), programmed to give 'signal preference to vehicular traffic during peak periods and to pedestrians at other times.'⁹ Therefore, left turning traffic from Kings Avenue and Parkes Way will have to be controlled by traffic lights.
- 2.6 The current design proposal shows the intersection at the Kings Avenue level controlled by twenty two (22) traffic signals.¹⁰
- 2.7 The proposal thus combines a conventional (if over-designed) 4-way intersection, controlled by traffic lights at the Kings Avenue level with a high-speed underpass at the Parkes Way level.

⁷ National Capital Authority, *The Griffin Legacy Infrastructure: Bridging Kings Avenue over Parkes Way at the Russell Roundabout, A.C.T.*, Statement of Evidence to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, The Authority, Canberra, March 2008, <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/pwc/canberrakingsave/subs/sub001.pdf> - accessed 1 June 2008 (hereafter NCA SoE).

⁸ NCA SoE, para 70.

⁹ NCA SoE, para 71.

¹⁰ NCA SoE, p.24, Intersection Plan.

- 2.8 The large scale excavation associated with the project will require reconstruction of the two trunk stormwater lines, which service the Russell Defence Headquarters¹¹ as well as ACTEWAGL high voltage power, water, sewer and gas services; Telstra copper and fibre communications service lines; ICON fibre optic cable services; and other communications services to the Defence complex including AAPT Powertel, Optus and TransACT.¹²
- 2.9 The NCA proposes to transport the excavated fill from the sunken section of Morshead Drive/Parkes Way to a 'suitable local site for future use'. This site is neither identified nor assessed for environmental impact.
- 2.10 The proposal will require the removal of a considerable number of mature eucalypts planted by the National Capital Development Commission approximately 40 years ago, which form distinctive groves in the wide median of Morshead Drive/Parkes Way and formalised groups in the grassed rond point of the Kings Avenue roundabout, framing the vista to the Australian American Memorial.¹³
- 2.11 New plantings will include formal street trees along Kings Avenue and grass bioswales in the median of Morshead Drive/Parkes Way.
- 2.12 The proposal includes a massive concrete bridge, 50m wide and spanning some 70m, with associated ramps, abutments and retaining walls. The structure is to be specially lit to accentuate its 'gateway' presence in the National Triangle.
- 2.13 The land take, scale and geometric complexity of the intersection have significantly increased at the detail design stage. Initial studies by the NCA, released as a series of artist's impressions in 2004, show tight turns from Kings Avenue to slim-profile on/off ramps parallel with Parkes Way, suggesting that the intersection would be no more than an incident in a heavily-treed landscape.¹⁴
- 2.14 As submitted to the Public Works Committee, the intersection has become a giant octopus of concrete.

¹¹ National Capital Planning Authority, *Draft Russell Master Plan Explanatory Report*, The Authority, Canberra, August 1994, Figure 7.1, p.58.

¹² NCA SoE, para. 14 & 15.

¹³ The extent of tree removal is not documented, or indeed mentioned, in the NCA SoE, and is not included in the 2007 tree assessment of the NCA's Central National Area redevelopment initiative: Lester Firth Associates (ACT) Pty Ltd, *The Griffin Legacy Constitution Avenue Urban Design Study: Street Tree Assessment*, Report to the National Capital Authority, The Consultants, Canberra, February 2007.

¹⁴ NCA, *The Griffin Legacy: Canberra, The Nation's Capital in the 21st Century*, The Authority, Canberra, 2004, p.164 passim.

- 2.15 The proposal forms part of the NCA's 'Griffin Legacy Infrastructure' project, initiated in 2007 following approval of the so-called 'Griffin Legacy' Amendments to the National Capital Plan.
- 2.16 In the 2007-2008 Federal Budget, the NCA received funding of \$58.8 million over four years from the Howard Government to construct the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass and widen Constitution Avenue to a double carriageway.¹⁵
- 2.17 In February 2008, the Minister of Finance in the Rudd Government, the Hon. Lindsay Tanner, announced budget cuts of \$46.5 million to the NCA's 'Griffin Legacy Infrastructure' Project and rescinded the decision to duplicate Constitution Avenue.¹⁶
- 2.18 The Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass remained funded – and is currently estimated to cost \$26.6 million over three years.¹⁷
- 2.19 The NCA submission to the Public Works Committee provides no supporting documentation or technical appendices.
- 2.20 The NCA's Statement of Evidence refers to 21 consultants' reports, which the Authority has commissioned; and 3 reports prepared by the ACT Government.¹⁸ To date, none of this background material has been made available on the website of the Public Works Committee.
- 2.21 The WBSGS notes that the *Manual of Procedures for Departments and Agencies* issued by the Secretariat of the Public Works Committee requires the NCA to provide a copy of all studies or papers mentioned in the submission.¹⁹
- 2.22 Three (3) background studies, listed in the NCA Statement of Evidence,²⁰ have been posted on the NCA website.²¹ These studies do not address the current proposal.²²

¹⁵ The Hon. Jim Lloyd, Minister for Local Government, Territories & Roads, 'Canberra's Roads: building the Griffin Legacy,' Media Release, 8 May 2007.

¹⁶ The Hon. Lindsay Tanner, Minister for Finance & Deregulation, 'Government details initial round of savings measures to assist inflation fight,' Media Release, 6 February 2008, http://www.financeminister.gov.au/media/2008/docs/2008-6-feb-savings_list.pdf - accessed 1 June 2008; John Thistleton, 'Funding cuts put city plans on hold,' *Canberra Times*, 7 April 2008.

¹⁷ NCA SoE, para 45.

¹⁸ NCA SoE, para 19, 37 & 54.

¹⁹ Parliament of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on Public Works, *Manual of Procedures for Departments and Agencies*, Edition 7.2, March 2008, p.25.

²⁰ NCA SoE, para 37.

²¹ As of 1 June 2008, the following reports could be downloaded from http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/planning_and_urban_design/griffin_legacy/infrastructure/ :

2.23 Two important studies, underway for many years, do not seem to have informed the planning and design the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass, despite their obvious relevance to the project:

- The Parliament House Vista Conservation Management Plan, let as a \$125,360 contract in 2005;²³
- The Parliamentary Zone Traffic Study, let as a \$345,326 contract in June 2006.²⁴

2.24 To facilitate the Public Hearings, which may otherwise be deflected by technical disagreement, the NCA should make all this material available.

2.25 Recommendation 1. Prior to the Public Hearings before the Public Works Committee on the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way Overpass, all background studies listed by the National Capital Authority in its Statement of Evidence, and other relevant technical reports, should be made publicly available.

Lester Firth Associates (ACT) Pty Ltd, *The Griffin Legacy Constitution Avenue Urban Design Study: Parliament House Vista*, Report to the National Capital Authority, The Consultants, Canberra, February 2007.

Lester Firth Associates (ACT) Pty Ltd, *The Griffin Legacy Constitution Avenue Urban Design Study: Street Tree Assessment*, Report to the National Capital Authority, The Consultants, Canberra, February 2007.

Maunsell AECOM, *Griffin Legacy Implementation – Traffic Analysis for Business Case*, Report to the National Capital Authority, The Consultants, Canberra, 8 December 2006 (hereafter Maunsell, *Traffic Analysis*, 2006).

²² The 2006 Maunsell *Traffic Analysis* does not disaggregate the cost/benefits of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass from a combined study of the overpass and Constitution Avenue duplication; the LFA studies do not address the site of the Kings Avenue/Parkes way interchange at all.

²³ NCA, *Annual Report, 2005-2006*, p.191; NCA, *Consultancy services let during 2005-2006 of \$10,000 or more*, <http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/downloads/publications/2005-06ConsultancyforInternet.pdf> - accessed 1 June 2008.

²⁴ NCA, *Calendar Year 2007 Senate Order on Departmental & Agency Contracts*, http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/downloads/corporate/SenateContinuingOrderJan2007toDec2007_v2.pdf - accessed 1 June 2008.

3.0 The 'Griffin Legacy' & the Role of the NCA

3.1 This inquiry before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works provides the first opportunity for a detailed investigation of the infrastructure implications of the 'Griffin Legacy' Amendments to the National Capital Plan.

3.2 The NCA's 'Griffin Legacy' initiative has two components:

- an uncontroversial historical analysis of Walter Burley Griffin's plans for Canberra, overseen by a distinguished Advisory Panel;
- a highly controversial set of development proposals for the symbolic centre of Canberra, which was not overseen or approved by the Advisory Panel,²⁵ and was not supported by the project's principal historical consultants.²⁶

3.3 The development proposals were advanced by the NCA in Draft Amendments 56, 59, 60 & 61 to the National Capital Plan.

3.4 In an unprecedented move, these Draft Amendments were not referred to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories but were directly approved by the Minister for Local Government, Territories & Roads, the Hon. Jim Lloyd, on 27 November 2007 and tabled in both Houses of Parliament on 6 December 2006, subject to a disallowance period of 15 sitting days of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The disallowance period expired at the end of March 2007.²⁷

3.5 During the disallowance period, the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories, responding to community concern, held a one-day Public Roundtable on 23 February 2007, which reviewed the Griffin Legacy Amendments.

3.6 In its report on the Roundtable, tabled on 22 March 2007, the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories made three recommendations:

²⁵ My UNSW colleague, Professor Robert Freestone, who was a member of the Panel, advises that it has not been convened since 2005. The 'Griffin Legacy' Draft Amendments to the National Capital Plan were released for public comment in August 2006.

²⁶ Christopher Vernon, 'Building the Griffin[s] Legacy?' *Landscape Architecture Australia*, no.113, February 2007, pp.38-40; Dr David Headon, Evidence before the NCET Inquiry into the Role of the NCA, Public Hearing, 14 May 2008, NCET *Hansard*, pp.7-8.

²⁷ The Hon. Jim Lloyd, Minister for Local Government, Territories & Roads, 'Minister Lloyd approves the Griffin Legacy Amendments.' Media Release, 7 December 2006, http://www.minister.infrastructure.gov.au/jl/releases/2006/December/L168_2006.htm - accessed 1 June 2008; for procedures followed with previous Draft Amendments to the National Capital Plan, see NCA, *Annual Report, 2004-2005*, pp.57-70.

- The Committee recommends that the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads in the future provides the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories with the option of inquiring into every Draft Amendment to the National Capital Plan. Where the committee requests an inquiry, the Draft Amendment under consideration should not be tabled until after the committee completes its inquiry;
- The Committee recommends that the National Capital Authority explore options for ensuring that submissions to all the Authority's consultation processes are made publicly available subject to full approval by the submitter and compliance with relevant privacy principles and advise the committee;
- The Committee recommends that before 29 March 2007 the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads moves to disallow Amendments 56, 59, 60 and 61 so that the National Capital Authority has the opportunity to further refine the amendments taking into account issues raised in the committee's report.²⁸

3.7 After the Committee's report was tabled, Minister Lloyd declined to disallow the amendments, and the matter lapsed in the House of Representatives.

3.8 However, in the Senate, Senator Bob Brown of the Australian Greens moved to disallow the 'Griffin Legacy' Amendments on 29 March 2007. The debate and vote on the disallowance motion were held on 10 May 2007. The motion was not supported.²⁹ The amendments were subsequently incorporated in the National Capital Plan.

3.9 In July 2007, Minister Lloyd issued the Howard Government's response to the Recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories review of the 'Griffin Legacy' Amendments. The Government supported Recommendation 2, but not Recommendations 1 & 3.³⁰

3.10 The manner in which the 'Griffin Legacy' Amendments to the National Capital Plan gained approval called into question the relationship between the Government

²⁸ Parliament of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories, *Review of the Griffin Legacy Amendments*, March 2007, p.1; Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates – House of Representatives, 26 March 2007, pp.6-9.

²⁹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates – Senate, 10 May 2007, pp.22-33.

³⁰ The Hon. Jim Lloyd, Minister for Local Government, Territories & Roads, *Government Response to the Joint Standing Committee's Roundtable Public Hearing on the Griffin Legacy Amendments*, July 2007.

and Parliamentary Committees; the consultation processes of the National Capital Authority; and the very basis of the NCA's capacity to plan and design the National Capital.

- 3.11 These issues were further highlighted when the NCA attempted to extend the 'Griffin Legacy' concept to justify large-scale redevelopment around the Albert Hall with Draft Amendment 53 to the National Capital Plan.
- 3.12 The NCA's handling of the 'Griffin Legacy' proposals was a major contributing factor to the March 2008 decision by the Rudd Government to initiate a comprehensive inquiry into the role of the NCA through the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories.
- 3.13 The Committee received 135 submissions, held seven days of public hearings and released its comprehensive report on 16 July 2008.
- 3.14 Among its many recommendations and statements, the Committee proposed that Draft Amendment 53 Albert Hall Precinct not proceed.³¹
- 3.15 The planning implications of the NCA's 'Griffin Legacy' Amendments have been the subject of detailed inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories on two occasions – Draft Amendments 56, 59, 60 & 61 in February-March 2007; and Draft Amendment 53 in March-July 2008.
- 3.16 On neither occasion did the Committee endorse the NCA's plans. In March 2007, the Committee called for Draft Amendments 56, 59, 60 & 61 to be disallowed; in July 2008, the Committee called for Draft Amendment 53 to not proceed.
- 3.17 This negative reaction to the NCA's 'Griffin Legacy' initiative by the Parliamentary Committee charged with the responsibility to inquire and report on the National Capital Plan stands in marked contrast to the positive claims and testimonials put before the Public Works Committee by the NCA itself.³²
- 3.18 The mismatch between image and reality resides in the name 'Griffin Legacy', which the NCA has adopted as a catch-all slogan for property redevelopment in the Central National Area of Canberra.
- 3.19 The NCA's proposals bear little relationship to the Walter Burley Griffin plan for Canberra.

³¹ NCET, *The Way Forward*, p.63.

³² NCA SoE, para 1, 31 & 32.

- 3.20 Indeed, in the matter before the Public Works Committee – the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass – the NCA's proposals bear NO relationship to the Walter Burley Griffin plan for Canberra, or the principles of Griffin's plan.
- 3.21 The intersection of Morshead Drive/Parkes Way and Kings Avenue dates from the late 1950s and was never part of the plans Walter Burley Griffin prepared for the Australian Federal Capital between 1911 and 1918.
- 3.22 The National Capital Development Commission built the Morshead Drive/Parkes Way arterial connection from Canberra Airport to Civic in the early 1960s, on the advice of the London-based planning consultant Sir William Holford.³³
- 3.23 This major east-west motorway was never part of the Griffin Plan, and is a major departure from the Griffin Plan.³⁴
- 3.24 The NCA's proposal to release the extensive area of grassed woodland between Parkes Way and Constitution Avenue for property development, in accordance with Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan, is a further departure from the Griffin Plan.
- 3.25 Walter Burley Griffin planned this area as Public Gardens – the 'central park' of the city and the site for national cultural institutions (the National Theatre, National Opera House, National Museums etc) and civic amenities, such as the city swimming pool.³⁵
- 3.26 The proposal to develop a significant section of Griffin's Public Gardens as a commercial/residential precinct is a complete violation of the Griffin Plan, and should not be advanced in Griffin's name, or claimed to be part of a 'Griffin Legacy' in any way.
- 3.27 Planning and design of this area in accordance with Griffin's principles would see removal of Parkes Way; expansion of Commonwealth and King's Parks to the north; construction of major cultural institutions on the park side of Constitution Avenue; conservation of Canberra Olympic Pool; and construction of light rail along the tree-lined medians of Kings Avenue and Constitution Avenue as part of a comprehensive, city-wide system.

³³ Sir William Holford, *Observations on the Future Development of Canberra, ACT*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1957, p.12.

³⁴ Paul Reid, *Canberra following Griffin: a design history of Australia's National Capital*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, 2002, pp.244-245, 252-254.

³⁵ Most clearly shown on the coloured version of Griffin's 'Preliminary Plan' of 1913, see Reid, *Canberra following Griffin*, p.110.

3.28 The subdivision and large-scale redevelopment of the land between Parkes Way and Constitution Avenue, authorised by Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan, is an initiative of the NCA, which bears no relationship to the original Griffin Plan for Canberra.

3.29 This property development project, and associated works such as the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass, will 'set in concrete' the unfortunate decision of the NCDC to put a motorway through the middle of the public open space, which Walter Burley Griffin planned as the most important urban park of the National Capital.

3.30 Recommendation 2: To avoid unnecessary confusion between the original Griffin Plan for Canberra and the redevelopment plans promoted by the NCA, the term 'Griffin Legacy' should not be used, and a more accurate descriptor, 'Central National Area redevelopment' be adopted for the NCA's planning initiatives.

3.31 Although the NCA is presenting its proposal to redevelop Central Canberra under the mantle of Griffin's name as a new idea – initiated in 2002³⁶ - the idea dates from the early 1990s, was actively promoted by the National Capital Planning Authority, as the NCA was then called, and produced a built outcome: the redevelopment of the Russell Defence Precinct.

3.32 This matter came before the Public Works Committee in 1994-1995.³⁷

3.33 At that time, the redevelopment of Russell was also investigated by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories as Draft Amendment 12 to the National Capital Plan.³⁸

3.34 Advanced as 'Completing the Triangle' – the realisation of Griffin's geometric road layout at the intersection of Kings Avenue and Constitution Avenue³⁹ – the proposal bore no relationship to Griffin's land use and transportation concept for

³⁶ NCA SoE, para 15.

³⁷ Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, *Report relating to the Proposed Redevelopment of Defence Office Accommodation at Russell, A.C.T.*, 9 March 1995 (Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper 54/1995).

³⁸ Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, *Report relating to the Proposed Redevelopment of Defence Office Accommodation at Russell, A.C.T.*, 9 March 1995 (Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper 54/1995); Parliament of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories, *Draft Amendment no.12 (Russell) of the National Capital Plan*, 10 May 1995 (Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper 87/1995).

³⁹ NCPA, *Draft Russell Master Plan Background Report: Completing the Triangle*, The Authority, Canberra, August 1994; NCPA, *Draft Russell Master Plan Explanatory Report: Completing the Triangle*, The Authority, Canberra, August 1994.

this all-important site, centred on his scheme for the City Railway and Central Station of Canberra.⁴⁰

- 3.35 The result of the NCPA's confused thinking was a confused Master Plan, which after more than a decade, remains partially realised in its road layout and building disposition.
- 3.36 Indeed, the Russell Master Plan gives every indication of never being realised, dependent as it is on demolition of major Commonwealth assets – the purpose-built headquarters of the Defence Signals Directorate, completed in 1992; the multi-storey Building 7, expanded and refurbished in 1999; and the former Russell Canteen, reconstructed as a Child Care facility in 2002.
- 3.37 The confused road layout at Russell – a combination of early 1960s NCDC service roads; late 1990s NCA geometric roads; and pragmatic adjustments between the two, which give access to large-scale surface car parks on undeveloped urban blocks – is a major contributing factor to traffic tangles in and around the Defence Headquarters Precinct of the National Capital.
- 3.38 The failure of the Russell Master Plan demonstrates the danger in proposing poorly conceived variants of Griffin's plans and principles, dressed up as something of substance.

⁴⁰ Griffin's City Railway scheme was considered by the Public Works Committee in 1916: Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, *Report and Minutes of Evidence and Diagrams relating to the Proposed City Railway of Canberra*, 1916 (Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper 354/1916).

4.0 The Stated Purpose of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way Overpass

4.1 The principal argument for the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is presented by the NCA on the basis of the 'Business Case' for the implementation of the Central National Area redevelopment planning initiatives:

The Business Case acknowledged that much of the development giving effect to the [Central National Area redevelopment] would be undertaken by private sector investment but concluded that the latent investment potential would only be realised if the trunk infrastructure was in place.⁴¹

4.2 The trunk infrastructure identified as critical for the implementation of the Central National Area redevelopment includes the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass and the duplication of Constitution Avenue from Russell to Civic.⁴²

4.3 Reclamation of part of West Basin is also listed with these works. Other works, indicated by the use of the word 'included' are not identified. Reconstruction of the existing Commonwealth Avenue/Parkes Way overpass and a Land Bridge over the Tuggeranong Freeway at Acton form part of the NCA's Central National Area redevelopment,⁴³ but are not mentioned in the current proposal.

4.4 The NCA makes clear that the cost of major infrastructure components of the plan to redevelop the symbolic centre of Canberra will not be recouped from the private sector.

4.5 Private development opportunities on the prime real estate of the National Capital will have to be subsidised by the Australian taxpayer.

4.6 Indeed, as far as the NCA is concerned, this is the *principal purpose* of the proposed work before the Committee: to 'release the latent development potential' of the Central National Area redevelopment initiative.⁴⁴

4.7 The NCA further states that the Business Case for the Central National Area redevelopment identified 'a range of transport, traffic and accessibility benefits' associated with the duplication of Constitution Avenue and bridging Kings Avenue over Parkes Way at the Russell roundabout, 'including significant travel time and vehicle operating cost savings and reductions in CO₂ emissions.'⁴⁵

⁴¹ NCA SoE, para 34.

⁴² NCA SoE, para 34.

⁴³ National Capital Plan, Amendment 61 West Basin, p.13, Indicative Development Plan.

⁴⁴ NCA SoE, para 38.

⁴⁵ NCA SoE, para 35.

- 4.8 However, the decision to duplicate Constitution Avenue has been rescinded and does not form part of the proposed work before the Committee.
- 4.9 The NCA has not disaggregated the benefits specific to the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass in terms of travel time, vehicle operating costs and CO₂ emissions.
- 4.10 The NCA Business Case also claims that provision of the trunk infrastructure would improve ‘amenity for commuters and visitors to the capital’ and ‘reduce the likelihood of commuter traffic intrusion into adjacent residential areas.’⁴⁶
- 4.11 Again, this assessment is based on trunk infrastructure provision, which includes the duplication of Constitution Avenue as a tree-lined boulevard. The improvements to commuter/visitor amenity and reduction in residential area traffic intrusion, which are specific to the proposed Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass, are not identified.
- 4.12 The NCA Business Case notes that ‘in terms of accessibility and security . . . the redevelopment of Constitution Avenue and the bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way would provide improved, more reliable and more readily secured transport links between the city, Parliament House and the airport.’⁴⁷
- 4.13 Again, the specific benefits of the proposed work before the Committee, without the duplication and upgrading of Constitution Avenue, are not identified.
- 4.14 The NCA further states that ‘the Russell roundabout has operated at capacity for some time and it is one of Canberra’s traffic black spots’ and bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way will ‘increase capacity’.⁴⁸
- 4.15 No figures are provided in the NCA submission to support this claim, nor any analysis as to why the roundabout has reached capacity (such as new employment concentration at Canberra International Airport; lack of employment in Gungahlin etc), or how the roundabout performs in relation to famous roundabouts of the world, such as the Place de l’Étoile, Paris whose capacity far exceeds the minor traffic movements of Canberra.
- 4.16 On its website, the NCA states that the Russell roundabout is ‘dangerous . . . the scene of more than 500 accidents between 2000 and 2005.’⁴⁹ The cause of the danger

⁴⁶ NCA SoE, para 35.

⁴⁷ NCA SoE, para 36.

⁴⁸ NCA SoE, para 41 & 39.

⁴⁹ NCA website, ‘Canberra’s roads, building the Griffin Legacy,’ 9 May 2007, http://www.nationalcapital.gov.au/corporate/media/media_release.asp?media_ID=172&mr_month=May&mr_year=2007 - accessed 1 June 2008.

is obvious – cars enter the roundabout too fast and there are too many exits leading to sudden lane-changes, combined with general issues of driver behaviour (risk taking rather than roundabout etiquette). The solution is not to re-build the road to freeway conditions with a flyover, but to calm the traffic, and to rationalise the number of exits.

- 4.17 The NCA states that the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass will ‘separate local and through traffic.’⁵⁰ As redesigned, the intersection will continue as a four-way traffic interchange serving the Parliamentary Zone, the Airport, Russell Defence Headquarters and Civic with the same combination of ‘local’ and ‘through’ traffic as at present.
- 4.18 The NCA makes the claim that ‘failure to undertake the project will stop the timely development of essential infrastructure resulting in unacceptable traffic congestion compromising access and safety at the roundabout and will inhibit access throughout the central national area.’⁵¹
- 4.19 The term ‘unacceptable traffic congestion’ is not defined, quantified or compared to other locations in Canberra, other Australian cities – or cities around the world.
- 4.20 The NCA states that the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is ‘required to meet the needs for future development of the Russell Defence Precinct and of the Commonwealth Government’s decisions to refurbish the Anzac Park offices . . . (construction underway) and to locate the new Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) building on Constitution Avenue (design underway).
- 4.21 As discussed in Paragraphs 5.4-5.9 (below), a grade separated interchange at Kings Avenue/Parkes Way is not the only available option to address the negative externalities of office development in and around Russell in terms of intersection capacity and safety.
- 4.22 The NCA states that the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass ‘will not address all of the traffic congestion that will result from the Commonwealth’s current commitments to office projects in Constitution Avenue.’⁵²
- 4.23 \$26.6 million is a considerable sum of money to spend on a partial solution to a problem. The NCA does not define, diagram or analyse the extent of traffic congestion, which it anticipates will be generated by its own development approvals – and the development approvals beyond its control.

⁵⁰ NCA SoE, para 39.

⁵¹ NCA SoE, para 41.

⁵² NCA SoE, para 43.

- 4.24 The latter include building approvals by the Federal Department of Transport at Canberra International Airport, which under recent amendments to the *Airports Act 1996*, is no longer subject to the National Capital Plan, and has become a commercial/retail complex approaching the size of Woden Town Centre.⁵³
- 4.25 The urban expansion and land use distribution program of the ACT Government has also proved to be beyond the control of the NCA in recent years. The ACT Government has abandoned the principle of employment distribution in a balanced network of town centres, established by the NCDC with its Y-Plan in the 1960s, and has turned instead to centralising employment, combined with residential intensification in Central Canberra.⁵⁴
- 4.26 This policy, released as *The Canberra Spatial Plan* in 2004, does not have statutory force. The Y-Plan remains the basis of the National Capital Plan, but the NCA has tacitly agreed to its abandonment.⁵⁵
- 4.27 Thus the problem of traffic congestion at the Russell roundabout has more causes than office construction on Constitution Avenue – its principal cause is the failure of the NCA to fulfill its statutory obligation to administer the National Capital Plan.
- 4.28 Canberra is a city of a mere 340,000 people, but with a dysfunctional planning system it has succeeded in tying itself in knots.
- 4.29 The NCA does not list and cost the works that it believes would address the problem of traffic congestion in this part of Canberra, so the cost/benefit of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass as a traffic device can be evaluated.
- 4.30 On the face of it, a \$26.6 million structure appears to be a very expensive band-aid solution to a widespread and endemic problem in car-reliant Canberra, when a lateral shift to Sustainable Transport Planning is clearly needed, as emphasised by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories in its recent report on the NCA.⁵⁶
- 4.31 The stated purpose of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass also includes the provision of ‘safe pedestrian access from the Russell Defence precinct to Kings Park and the shores of Lake Burley Griffin.’⁵⁷

⁵³ NCET, *The Way Forward*, pp.98-106.

⁵⁴ ACT Planning & Land Authority, *The Canberra Spatial Plan*, The Authority, Canberra, March 2004.

⁵⁵ NCA SoE, para 18.

⁵⁶ NCET, *The Way Forward*, p.125, Recommendation 13.

⁵⁷ NCA SoE, para 46.

- 4.32 As discussed in Paragraphs 5.10-5.11 (below), a grade separated interchange at this location is not the optimum means to achieve safe pedestrian access to the lakeshore parklands.
- 4.33 The NCA makes the further claim that the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass 'will restore Kings Avenue as one side of Griffin's National Triangle.' No restoration is necessary. Kings Avenue in its current configuration clearly forms one side of the Griffin Triangle.
- 4.34 Indeed, as pointed out in the submission by the Canberra Chapter of the WBGS, 'the proposal seems quite contrary to the purpose. Compared with the present, clear linear form, the proposed flyover introduces a new dynamic distortion into the geometric layout. There is a new bridge, earth mounds for the recessed Parkes Way and eight intersecting access and exit roads in a pronounced, large, complex intersection structure. They will detract from rather than enhance the line of Kings Avenue.'⁵⁸
- 4.35 Conspicuously missing from the NCA's Statement of Evidence is the word 'sustainability' and any commitment to sustainable development, apart from an undocumented claim of reduced CO₂ emissions.⁵⁹ On the face of it, significant CO₂ reduction seems implausible given queuing and waiting times at the on/off ramps to Kings Avenue and the replacement of a flat stretch of Parkes Way with a pronounced dip and rise; not to mention the environmental impact and energy use involved in the massive road works and associated infrastructure relocation.
- 4.36 Overall, the NCA's stated purpose for the \$26.6 million Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is poorly conceived, poorly argued – and so far as the March 2008 submission to the Public Works Committee is concerned, poorly supported with technical data.

⁵⁸ Walter Burley Griffin Society Canberra Chapter, Submission to the Public Works Committee Inquiry into the Proposed Bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way, 20 June 2008, Section 10.

⁵⁹ NCA SoE, para 8 – as stated in para 4.8 (above), the NCA has not identified the reduced CO₂ emissions specific to the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass claimed in the 'Griffin Legacy' Business Case.

5.0 Consideration of Design Options

- 5.1 There is no serious consideration of design options in the material before the Public Works Committee.
- 5.2 In its March 2008 Statement of Evidence, the NCA briefly discusses two alternative overpass designs – (1) a twin-bridge proposal, one for each carriageway, similar to the Commonwealth Avenue/Parkes Way bridges built by the NCDC in the early 1960s; and (2) the preferred ‘single point urban interchange’ bridge.⁶⁰
- 5.3 The twin-bridge proposal could only handle right-turns with clover-leaf ramps, which the NCA has campaigned to eliminate in other parts of Canberra.⁶¹ This is no option at all.
- 5.3 The NCA has not presented the obvious advantages of a simple, on-grade intersection, i.e. no overpass.
- 5.4 The on-grade solution is possible in various configurations:
- (1) retention of the Russell roundabout and reduction of its complexity by changing from a 4-way to a 3-way intersection, i.e. closing off the Kings Avenue entrance to Russell and directing traffic to the Defence Headquarters precinct from Blamey Crescent (extended to Parkes Way); Constitution Avenue; Russell Drive and Northcott Drive (the Kings Avenue vista and ceremonial approach to the Australian-American Memorial could be maintained with landscape treatment);
 - (2) retention of the Russell roundabout and regulation of its traffic flows with traffic lights in the AM and PM peaks;
 - (3) introduction of a simple, 4-way intersection for vehicles and pedestrians controlled by traffic lights.
- 5.5 Option 1 is clearly the least cost, and in many ways, the most elegant – it would conserve the harmonious motorway landscape created by the NCDC in the 1960, a significant work of mid-century modernism as discussed in Section 8.0.
- 5.6 Option 2 is something of a hybrid, but not unprecedented in urban areas with large fluctuations in traffic flows at peak/non-peak times. It appears to be the solution

⁶⁰ NCA SoE, para 64.

⁶¹ See Amendment 33 of the National Capital Plan (for the NCA’s approved elimination of the Parliamentary Zone cloverleaves); and the proposal for reconstructing the Commonwealth Avenue/Parkes Way overpass in Amendment 60 of the National Capital Plan.

adopted at the series of roundabouts east of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way intersection by the ACT Government in its current \$60 million Airport corridor upgrade.⁶²

- 5.7 Option (3) is the most logical, given the introduction of traffic lights on the other principal intersections of the Airport-Civic route by the NCA and the ACT Government (see Section 6.0, below).
- 5.8 The proposed Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass already features a 4-way intersection controlled by traffic lights at the Kings Avenue level. There is no need for a high-speed underpass at the Parkes Way level.
- 5.9 Simple, on-grade 4-way intersections controlled by traffic lights exist in every city in the world and are quite capable of handling the traffic volumes of a small city such as Canberra.
- 5.10 A 4-way intersection controlled by traffic lights is also the simplest, most direct solution for pedestrian movement along Kings Avenue and Parkes Way to the lakeside parklands.
- 5.11 The NCA's proposal for the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass would present a formidable obstacle for pedestrians. To cross Parkes Way on the \$26.6 million elevated bridge structure, a pedestrian would have to proceed on a 100m journey along a cranked, deflected path and cross six lanes of traffic, three traffic islands and four on/off ramps, controlled by four sets of traffic lights.⁶³

⁶² Canberra Airport Roads Working Group, *Report*, October 2006, pp.5-6

⁶³ NCA SoE, p.24, Intersection Plan.

6.0 Advisability of carrying out the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way Overpass

- 6.1 Construction of a grade-separated intersection at Kings Avenue/Parkes Way is not advisable under any circumstances.
- 6.2 There is no sense in constructing a high-speed intersection at this location, given the presence of traffic lights at intersections 500 metres to the east, and 500 metres to the west – 30 seconds in each direction at 60 km/h; just over 20 seconds in each direction at 80 km/h.
- 6.3 Just 500 metres to the east of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way intersection, and around a tight bend, the east-west motorway of Parkes Avenue/Morshead Drive comes to a 4-way roundabout at Russell Drive/Menindee Drive, a much-used access point to the Russell Defence precinct to the north, and Clare Holland House hospice to the south.
- 6.4 The ACT Government will install traffic lights at this roundabout as part of the recently-funded upgrade of the Airport access roads.⁶⁴
- 6.5 Just 500 metres to the west of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way intersection, the NCA proposes to extend Blamey Crescent to Parkes Way in accordance with Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan. This intersection will be controlled by traffic lights.⁶⁵
- 6.6 Further to the west, the NCA proposes to construct ten (10) new cross streets between Constitution Avenue and Parkes Way (as part of Amendment 60 to the NCP), engineered to meet Parkes Way at T-intersections along a new slip lane; plus a major traffic light-controlled T-intersection at Coranderrk Street, Reid – a key entry point to Civic – which will replace the roundabout at this location.⁶⁶
- 6.7 To the east of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way intersection, the ACT Government has built five (5) roundabouts on the approach roads to Canberra Airport since the early 1990s – at Russell Drive, Staff Cadet Avenue, Dairy Road, Monaro Highway and Beltana Road.

⁶⁴ Canberra Airport Roads Working Group, *Report*, October 2006, pp.5-6.

⁶⁵ Maunsell, *Traffic Analysis*, 2006, p.13.

⁶⁶ NCA, *National Capital Plan Amendment 60 - Constitution Avenue*, Indicative Road Structure, p.9.

- 6.8 Traffic signals will be installed at these roundabouts as part of a comprehensive \$60 million upgrade of the Canberra Airport transport corridor, which is currently in construction with funding support of \$30 million from the Federal Government.⁶⁷
- 6.9 The combined effect of multiple traffic light-controlled intersections from Civic to the Airport reduces grade separation at Kings Avenue/Parkes Way to an absurdity.
- 6.10 The NCA Statement of Evidence provides no documentation of the extensive roadworks to the east and west of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way intersection, and no analysis of the role of the intersection in the overall Canberra road network.
- 6.11 The proposal, presented in isolation, appears to be an upgrade of Parkes Way to a freeway. However, when seen in context, the 'freeway' conditions will extend for no more than a few hundred metres between traffic lights at the new Blamey Crescent intersection and traffic lights at the Russell Drive roundabout.
- 6.12 There is no need for a \$26.6 million flyover midway between these intersections.
- 6.13 Recommendation 3: The current program of traffic light installation on the Civic-Canberra Airport transport corridor makes the \$26.6 million Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass an extravagant, unnecessary and counter-productive proposal. The project should not proceed.**
- 6.14 Recommendation 4: The way forward is to reconceptualise Parkes Way as a tree-lined boulevard, which either retains the Russell roundabout with reduced complexity or replaces it with a simple 4-way intersection controlled by traffic lights.**
- 6.15 Recommendation 5: The NCA and ACT Government should work together to extend the urban boulevard concept the length of the Civic-Canberra Airport transport corridor, so this all-important approach route to the Central National Area becomes a simple, elegant avenue consistent in its design speed, design quality and spatial character.**
- 6.16 The current confused combination of freeway/motorway/arterial conditions from Civic to the Airport needs to be re-designed as an integrated spatial sequence and calmed to the consistent conditions of an urban boulevard similar to Anzac Parade, Moore Park in Sydney or the great avenues of Melbourne: Royal Parade, Victoria Parade, St Kilda Road.

⁶⁷ Canberra Airport Roads Working Group, *Report*, October 2006, pp.5-6; Martin Ferguson, 'Federal Labor commits \$30 million to upgrade Canberra Airport transport corridor,' Media Release, 12 October 2007; NCET, *The Way Forward*, p.105, Par. 8.29.

- 6.17 In this context, it is clear that Kings Avenue and Parkes Way should continue to meet on grade in one of two possible configurations – a roundabout of reduced complexity or a simple 4-way intersection controlled by traffic lights.
- 6.18 The design of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way intersection should be consistent with the design of the intersections from Civic to the Airport, i.e. the plans of the NCA and the ACT Government for the Airport link should be simple, straightforward and integrated.
- 6.19, At the metropolitan scale, the daily pattern of traffic flows around Russell must be seen as a complex function of land use, transportation options and urban development over time.
- 6.20 However, in a global context, Canberra’s moments of congestion must be seen as trivial.
- 6.21 The delays documented in the NCA’s Business Case, extrapolated to the worst possible conditions in 2031, are no more than a few minutes. For example, if nothing is done to the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way intersection, travel time from the Airport to Parliament House in the AM peak in 2031 is estimated to take 2.6 minutes longer than in 2011.⁶⁸
- 6.22 The trip the other way, from Parliament House to the Airport in the AM peak, would involve more delays – in the order of 20-30 minutes in the ‘do nothing’ case – but still not significant in comparison to other cities in the world.
- 6.23 The NCA Business Case does not document the length of the Canberra peak.
- 6.24 Given the scale and standard of Canberra’s existing road network – unequalled in Australia – the solution to Canberra’s moments of congestion is not ‘more roads’ but a more rational distribution of traffic flows.
- 6.25 A rational distribution of land uses, which the NCDC tried to implement with the development of Town Centres and the Y-Plan, would be one way to achieve this.⁶⁹
- 6.26 However, this concept has been thwarted by commercial development in Canberra since the 1980s⁷⁰ – and now seems to be beyond the combined capacities of the city’s

⁶⁸ Maunsell, *Traffic Analysis*, 2006, Table 4.1, p.16; n.b. purported time savings of up to 36.5 minutes, shown in this Table are based on the \$58.8 million infrastructure package, i.e. the Kings Avenue overpass plus the Constitution Avenue upgrade.

⁶⁹ NCDC, *Tomorrow’s Canberra: planning for growth and change*, The Commission, Canberra, 1970.

⁷⁰ John Gilchrist, ‘Commercial Centres in Canberra: planning and implementation,’ in: S.R. Schreiner & C.J. Lloyd, *Canberra: what sort of city?* Urban Research Unit, ANU, Canberra, 1988, pp.36-47.

three planning agencies: the National Capital Authority, the ACT Planning & Land Authority; and the Airport planners, the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government

6.27 Other ways to achieve a more rational distribution of traffic flows is to increase the use of public transport (difficult to initiate, given the low density, dispersed pattern of urban development across the ACT); and to improve the capacity for rational route choice by vehicle drivers.

6.28 The latter is now possible through Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology, i.e. vehicle-to-infrastructure communication, which allows synchronised communication between vehicles and traffic controls (traffic lights, intersection cameras etc). This provides real-time information and enables drivers to select optimum routes in the course of their journey.⁷¹

6.29 ITS technology and applications are well established in Australia. A 2002 inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport & Regional Services found that ITS developments in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria had improved the efficiency of the road systems in those jurisdictions, 'thereby reducing the need for additional road construction.'⁷²

6.30 The NCA makes no mention of ITS technology in its submission to the Public Works Committee on the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass. Yet, the Airport-Civic route and other approach roads to Central Canberra clearly lend themselves to the implementation of this technology in terms of traffic management, security and reduction in CO₂ emissions.

6.31 Recommendation 6. Instead of freeway-standard construction in the Central National Area, the NCA in association with the ACT Government should introduce Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology so that Canberra – a city of a mere 340,000 people – can make more efficient use of its existing road network.

⁷¹ Joseph M. Sussmann, *Perspectives on Intelligent Transportation Systems*, Springer, New York, 2005.

⁷² Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport & Regional Services, *Moving on Intelligent Transport Systems*, Canberra, December 2002, p.v.

7.0 The Cost Effectiveness of the Proposal & Revenue Potential

- 7.1 The March 2008 NCA submission to the Public Works Committee provides no basis to assess the cost effectiveness of the proposed Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass.
- 7.2 The submission contains no cost breakdown of the project; no alternative proposals; no costing of alternative proposals; and no cost/benefit analysis at all.
- 7.3 \$26.6 million for one intersection is a significant sum of money, considered in the context of \$30 million of Federal funds allocated to the Canberra Airport transport corridor (approximately 3km of four-lane, dual-carriageway roads and six intersections).
- 7.4 The long-term aim of the NCA's 'Central National Area redevelopment' is the subdivision and sale of the symbolic centre of Canberra.
- 7.5 The 'Business Case' which underpins this proposition is a matter of prime public concern.
- 7.6 The relationship of infrastructure cost to revenue is critical to the scale, phasing and financial viability of a redevelopment scheme of this nature.
- 7.7 As discussed in Section 4.0 (above), the NCA states that the principal purpose of the proposed work before the Committee is to 'release the latent development potential' of the 'Central National Area redevelopment' initiative.⁷³
- 7.8 The NCA's Business Case determined that 'the latent investment potential' would only be realised if the trunk infrastructure (including the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass and the duplication of Constitution Avenue) was built up front.⁷⁴
- 7.9 The NCA analysis indicates that despite the locational advantages and immense prestige of a development site on Constitution Avenue/Parkes Way - with views over Canberra's Central Parklands and Lake Burley Griffin to the Parliamentary Zone - the investment potential of this land will not be realised without public investment in 'trunk infrastructure'.
- 7.10 The development scenario is quite clear. Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan has 'up-zoned' land along Parkes Way and Constitution Avenue to permit 8-storey development, with Gross Floor Area totalling 1,029,000 sq m by 2031 –

⁷³ NCA SoE, para.38.

⁷⁴ NCA SoE, para.34.

approximately half the total GFA of the NCA's Central National Area redevelopment proposals, which also include City Hill and West Basin.⁷⁵

- 7.11 The NCA's Business Case acknowledges that the cost of subdividing and servicing this land will be so great that full cost recovery from the development industry will not be possible, i.e. private sector investment will have to be subsidised by publicly-funded 'trunk infrastructure'.
- 7.12 \$26.6 million for the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is the first call on this subsidy.
- 7.13 The total subsidy expected by the NCA is not revealed in the documentation before the Public Works Committee, but it is known to include the cost of upgrading Constitution Avenue (\$46.5 million) and the cost of filling in the Acton shore of West Basin, Lake Burley Griffin (no estimate available).⁷⁶
- 7.14 It can be reasonably assumed that the NCA's category of 'trunk infrastructure' also includes the plan to reconstruct the Commonwealth Avenue/Parkes Way grade-separated intersection, and to build a 400m wide Land Bridge over the Tuggeranong Freeway at Acton, in accordance with Amendment 61 to the National Capital Plan.⁷⁷
- 7.15 If this assumption is correct, the 'trunk infrastructure' subsidy will total at least \$100 million.
- 7.16 The principal beneficiary of this subsidy will be the ACT Government⁷⁸ – not the Commonwealth Government – as most of the undeveloped land is 'Territory land', not 'National land'.
- 7.17 On Constitution Avenue, the only undeveloped holding of 'National Land' is located on the south side of the avenue between the Russell roundabout and the Anzac Park East building.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Added GFA for Constitution Avenue East and West, City Hill and West Basin, Maunsell, *Traffic Analysis*, 2006, p.14, Table 3-2, Options 2 & 3; see also evidence by NCA officer, Mr Graham Scott- Bohanna, NCET, 'Griffin Legacy' Roundtable, NCET *Hansard*, 23 February 2007, p.44.

⁷⁶ See para 2.15 (above) & NCA SoE, para.34.

⁷⁷ National Capital Plan, Amendment 61 West Basin, p.13, Indicative Development; in addition to 'trunk infrastructure', the NCA also refers to 'precinct infrastructure' (SoE, Par.38), which is not defined but presumably means local streets, services, public domain improvements, community facilities etc.

⁷⁸ Other beneficiaries of the 'up-zoning' and infrastructure subsidy include existing land owners along Constitution Avenue, e.g, the Anglican Church of St Johns and the RSL, both of whom have prepared major redevelopment schemes for their properties.

⁷⁹ National Capital Plan, Appendix D – Declared National Land.

- 7.18 Under Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan, this land is zoned 'National Capital Use' and the large parcel adjoining the Anzac Park East building (Section 49 Parkes) is currently under investigation for a new central office for the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and the Office of National Assessments (ONA).⁸⁰
- 7.19 Section 49, Parkes has 300m frontages to Parkes Way and Constitution Avenue.⁸¹
- 7.20 If the ASIO/ONA central office is built on this site, it would seem unlikely that the Commonwealth Government would sell the property to the private sector; and the same presumably applies to the remaining National Land to the east, which adjoins the Russell Defence Headquarters.
- 7.21 Therefore, the opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to recover the cost of its 'trunk infrastructure' investment in the redevelopment of Constitution Avenue would appear to be zero.
- 7.22 One obvious solution to the issue of cost recovery is to relocate the ASIO/ONA central office from one of the prime parcels of commercial property in Australia – with spectacular views over the Central Parklands and Lake Burley Griffin to the Parliamentary Zone – to a more appropriate and secure location, such as Campbell Park; and sell Section 49, Parkes to the private sector.
- 7.23 Another solution is to reduce the cost of the 'trunk infrastructure' by rejecting extravagant, unnecessary and counter-productive proposals, such as the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass.
- 7.24 A third solution is to reduce the scale of the development and associated infrastructure costs.
- 7.25 1,029,000 sq m of added Gross Floor Area (GFA) on Constitution Avenue is a very large development. The NCA estimates that this total will include 320,000 sq m of residential development and 613,000 sq m of commercial development.⁸² This equates to approximately 7000 residents and 12,000 jobs.

⁸⁰ National Capital Plan, Amendment 60 – Constitution Avenue, p.4, Fig.12; Department of Finance & Deregulation, Land, Property & Asset Management, Property & Construction, Projects – Central Office for ASIO and ONA, <http://www.finance.gov.au/property/property/property-construction.html#asio> - accessed 20 July 2008.

⁸¹ NCA, Constitution East, Parkes – Urban Design Guidelines, The Authority, Canberra, May 2006.

⁸² Maunsell, *Traffic Analysis*, 2006, p.14, Table 3-2, Options 2 & 3.

- 7.26 In relation to today's Canberra, this development proposition is equivalent to accommodating the combined population of Campbell, Reid and Acton; and a third of the jobs in Civic – on one street.⁸³
- 7.27 The WBGs considers this inappropriate. Canberra would be a far greater city if the southern side of Constitution Avenue was devoted, for the most part, to cultural institutions, civic amenities and parkland as Griffin intended (the siting of the Sulman-award winning Olympic Swimming Pool in this location in the 1950s was in accordance with Griffin's principles; this civic amenity now appears to be threatened by commercial development).
- 7.28 To complement the goal of increased significance of Constitution Avenue in the life of the National Capital – and accepting that some intensification of inner Canberra is sound public policy – the widening of Constitution Avenue has merit as a public works program of public value, as further discussed in Section 8.0 (below). It could also have benefit as an economic proposition, if the scale of development is carefully calibrated.
- 7.29 Recommendation. The Rudd Government decision to cut the Constitution Avenue upgrade and fund the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass should be reversed; the overpass should be cut and the Constitution Avenue upgrade funded.**
- 7.30 Recommendation In terms of economic cost and cost recovery, the benefits of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass as a work of urban infrastructure are non-existent; the economic benefits of the Constitution Avenue upgrade are worthy of rigorous analysis, based on development of appropriate scale.**

⁸³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Table 8 Estimated Resident Population, Statistical Local Areas, Australian Capital Territory, 2006; ACTPLA Planning Statistics, North Canberra, City.

8.0 The Public Value of the Work

- 8.1 The proposed Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is extravagant, unnecessary and counter-productive. It has no public value.
- 8.2 However, the National Capital Authority has performed a public service by drawing attention to the inherent flaws in its Central National Area redevelopment scheme with this proposal.
- 8.3 As highlighted in Paragraph 1.7 (above), the Rudd Government also performed a public service by its decision in February 2008 to cut funding for the duplication of Constitution Avenue.
- 8.4 This decision broke the nexus between two different urban development proposals – the unnecessary Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass and the more soundly based scheme to rebuild Constitution Avenue.
- 8.5 Constitution Avenue – termed ‘Capital Terrace’ by Walter Burley Griffin – is a key element of the Griffin Plan for Canberra. It forms the base of the Parliamentary Triangle and the all-important alignment of Griffin’s Municipal Axis: the avenue, which he envisaged would ennoble the everyday life of the citizens of the city with cultural institutions, the National Stadium, and the crowning element of the Municipal Centre, the City Hall on City Hill.⁸⁴
- 8.6 In the development of Canberra to date, Constitution Avenue has not fulfilled this role.
- 8.7 The NCA’s Central National Area redevelopment scheme aims to revitalise Constitution Avenue, although sterilising 300 metres of prime frontage with the high security presence of the ASIO/ONA headquarters is hardly the way to achieve this.
- 8.8 The NCA has released artist’s impressions of Constitution Avenue rebuilt as a Parisian-style boulevard, crowded with block after block of street cafés.⁸⁵
- 8.9 The 8-storey (25 m high) urban development permitted under Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan is more likely to end up like Canberra’s own Barry Drive than the Boulevard St-Germain.
- 8.10 The NCA does not have urban design controls in place to prevent the roll out of ‘more of the same’ very ordinary commercial development that has been the hallmark of Canberra since the 1980s, produced by a small-town entrepreneurs for a

⁸⁴ Reid, *Canberra following Griffin*, pp.46, 51, 63, 65, 74-76.

⁸⁵ National Capital Plan, Amendment 60 Constitution Avenue, front cover, p.17.

guaranteed rental market, with no interest in excellence – but an undeniable skill at making the system work for them.

- 8.11 Indeed, the first development proposed by the private sector under Amendment 60 to the National Capital Plan, the redevelopment of RSL House on the corner of Constitution Avenue and Blamey Crescent, Campbell made an ambit claim to exceed the 25 m height limit by 9 m – a 36% increase on the nominal NCA height control, the equivalent of three extra floors – argued on the need to secure unimpeded views of the Australian War Memorial.⁸⁶
- 8.12 As approved, Amendment 60 has significantly ‘up-zoned’ Constitution Avenue, and the implications of its development potential must be understood in relation to the Russell Master Plan, approved as Amendment 12 to the National Capital Plan in 1995, with no development capacity quantified, only an understanding that it was ‘a proposal to construct an unspecified number of Commonwealth offices.’⁸⁷
- 8.13 The NCA now states that in association with the Department of Defence, it ‘has developed a Master Plan for future building development opportunities in the Russell precinct. Should the Department of Defence advance these building development options additional road works and car parking will be required.’⁸⁸ In other words, more roads.
- 8.14 It is unclear whether this statement refers to the 1995 Russell Master Plan, or a more recent master planning exercise. From the available information, it would appear that the total GFA planned for Russell is in the order of 380,000 sq m.⁸⁹
- 8.15 The 1995 Russell Master Plan produced an important outcome with the upgrade of Northcott Drive over the saddle of Mount Pleasant to provide a scenic entry point to Central Canberra from the north; and to meet a new intersection of Constitution Avenue and Sellheim Avenue, Russell constructed more or less where Griffin planned the Russell apex of the Parliamentary Triangle.⁹⁰
- 8.16 This combination of new GFA in the Russell precinct and the Northcott Drive connection, means that Constitution Avenue has the potential to form part of an

⁸⁶ Returned Services League of Australia, *Announcing the Proposed New RSL National Headquarters, RSL House within the Constitution Avenue East Precinct*, The League, Canberra, February 2007, pp.11, i, ix.

⁸⁷ NCET, *Draft Amendment no.12 (Russell) of the National Capital Plan*, CPP87/1995, p.66, para.4.9.

⁸⁸ NCA SoE, para.44.

⁸⁹ Maunsell, *Traffic Analysis*, 2006, p.2, Figure 1-1; Graham Scott- Bohanna, NCET, ‘Griffin Legacy’ Roundtable, NCET *Hansard*, 23 February 2007, p.44.

⁹⁰ The intersection was moved from the precise apex of Griffin’s Parliamentary Triangle by NCET, as construction would have involved encroachment by extra excavation on a section of the Canberra Nature Park, Campbell; see NCET, *Draft Amendment no.12 (Russell) of the National Capital Plan*, CPP87/1995, pp.43-44, Par.3.64-3.69.

integrated movement system at inner city and metropolitan scale, not as a backwater to the flows on Parkes Way, as established by the NCDC, but as an effective element in an urban grid that diffuses flows through city streets.

8.17 Recommendation 9: Constitution Avenue and Parkes Way should be redesigned and rebuilt as equivalent urban boulevards to calm and distribute traffic through urban blocks formed by a network of avenues and cross streets.

8.18 Recommendation 10: Constitution Avenue should be widened to a double carriageway with a cross-section, which would permit the insertion of Light Rail in a dedicated, tree-lined median.

8.19 This concept of streets, avenues and Light Rail is consistent with Griffin's intentions for Inner Canberra.⁹¹

8.20 With the recent policy announcement by Jon Stanhope, the ACT Chief Minister, that Light Rail is now the top infrastructure priority of his government,⁹² the detailed design of an Airport/Civic/Parliamentary Triangle route should be the prime objective of Inner Canberra transportation planning.

8.21 This objective is also consistent with the recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories that the Commonwealth and the ACT Government prepare an integrated Sustainable Transport Plan for Canberra.⁹³

8.22 The NCA proposal for the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass makes no mention of Sustainable Transport and no mention of Light Rail. The complex structure at the Kings Avenue level, though over-designed for cars, seems to have no capacity for a dedicated Light Rail route; and grade-separated from Parkes Way/Morshead Drive, it has no capacity for a Light Rail connection to the Airport.⁹⁴

8.23 The ACT Government's current plans for the Airport corridor upgrade are costed at \$60 million (including \$30 million in Federal Funds).⁹⁵ The NCA's plans for the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass and Constitution Avenue upgrade were costed at \$58.8 million in 2007. Taken together, this comes to the staggering total of \$120 million earmarked for the Airport-Civic connection.⁹⁶

⁹¹ NCA, *The Griffin Legacy*, 2004, pp.67, 70, 71, 74-75.

⁹² Natasha Rudra, 'It's all onboard in push for light rail,' *Canberra Times*, 10 July 2007.

⁹³ NCET, *The Way Forward*, pp.123-125.

⁹⁴ NCA SoE, p.24, Intersection Plan; p.28, Kings Avenue Cross Section 2.

⁹⁵ NCET, *The Way Forward*, p.105, para 8.29.

⁹⁶ To put this in perspective, the Gungahlin Drive Extension cost \$116.5 million.

- 8.24 This must be seen as a total waste of money if it does not include provision for a Light Rail connection; and more so, if \$26.6 million is spent on a grade-separated structure at Russell that would preclude a Light Rail connection.
- 8.25 In general, the design of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass has no public value as a contribution to the urban life and the urban landscape of the National Capital. It is a large, oppressive engineering structure, unrelated in its forms and details to the other concrete bridges in the Parliamentary Triangle – either the 1960s bridges built by the NCDC or the elegant 1980s bridges built as part of the New Parliament House project.
- 8.26 At the Parkes Way level, the vertical and horizontal alignment of the design for the excavated roadway is utilitarian and awkward as it dips under Kings Avenue and as it swerves to rejoin the widely-spaced carriageways of the 1960s – in marked contrast to the integrated sweep of vertical and horizontal alignment that distinguished the work of the NCDC civil engineers a generation ago.
- 8.27 The NCA submission ascribes no heritage value to the engineered form of the Russell roundabout and its seamless integration with the motorway landscape of Parkes Way, the Kings Avenue bridges over Lake Burley Griffin, and the naturalistic plantings of the lake foreshores. However, all were conceived at the same time by the NCDC, working in association with the office of Sir William Holford.⁹⁷
- 8.28 As a large-scale technical and aesthetic achievement, this motorway landscape must be considered one of the great works of mid-century modernism in Australia, with the Russell roundabout one its integral elements.
- 8.29 Although proposing total removal of the NCDC roadscape, the NCA has concluded that the project has no heritage impact because the Russell roundabout is not located within a National Heritage Place or a Commonwealth Heritage Place.⁹⁸
- 8.30 This is the result of severe limitations in the site definition of the relevant Heritage Places. For example, the Parliament House Vista, which is on the Commonwealth Heritage List, does not include the whole vista from Parliament House. In the vicinity of the Russell roundabout, the so-called ‘Vista’ is arbitrarily restricted to the western alignment of Kings Avenue and the southern alignment of Parkes Way, i.e. it does not reach the Russell roundabout, nor for that matter the

⁹⁷ NCA SoE, para 57-59; Reid, *Canberra following Griffin*, pp.248, 269; Eric Sparke, *Canberra, 1954-1980*, AGPS, Canberra, 1988, pp.60-61, 116, 136-139, 165, 168; W.C. Andrews, ‘Roads and Bridges,’ in Fitzgerald, A. (ed.) *Canberra’s Engineering Heritage*, Institution of Engineers Australia, Canberra Division, Canberra, 1983, pp.30-36; William Holford & Partners, *An Advisory Report on the Landscape of the Canberra Lake Scheme*, The Consultants, London, 1961.

⁹⁸ NCA SoE, para 57.

Australian-American Memorial, the Russell Defence Headquarters or Mount Pleasant.⁹⁹

- 8.31 A 2007 study of the Parliament House Vista, commissioned by the NCA, was therefore able to assess the heritage impact of the Central National Area redevelopment proposals without looking at the Russell roundabout.¹⁰⁰
- 8.32 The NCA has subsequently retained a leading heritage consultant, Jennifer Hill of Architectural Projects Pty Ltd, for a heritage assessment of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass.¹⁰¹
- 8.33 It is not clear from the NCA's March submission to the Public Works Committee, whether this consultancy is the source of the statement that 'there will be no adverse impacts on the values of the [Parliament House] Vista by the proposed works.'¹⁰²
- 8.34 The WBSG considers that a thorough heritage assessment would ascribe aesthetic and technical value to the work of the NCDC. The Russell roundabout must be considered 'all-of-a-piece' with the Rond Terrace roundabout at Anzac Parade; the roundabout at Coranderrk Street, Reid; the drifts of eucalypts on the median between the widely spaced carriageways; and the vistas over parkland and lake to the great institutions of the National Capital.
- 8.35 To rip up this landscape would be a massive work of vandalism.
- 8.36 The way forward is to reconceptualise Parkes Way as a tree-lined boulevard, which either retains the Russell roundabout with reduced complexity or replaces it with a simple, clear 4-way intersection controlled by traffic lights.
- 8.37 In addition to its cavalier attitude to heritage impact, the NCA is less than forthcoming about the environmental impact of the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass.
- 8.38 The full extent of the excavation of the Parkes Way road reservation to sink the carriageways under Kings Avenue and to re-locate major urban and Defence communications services is not documented in the NCA submission to the Public Works Committee. The excavation would appear to be approximately 7 – 10m deep. It will produce a large quantity of fill.

⁹⁹ Parliament House Vista, Australian Heritage Database, http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;place_id=105466 - accessed 20 July 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Lester Firth Associates (ACT) Pty Ltd, *The Griffin Legacy Constitution Avenue Urban Design Study: Parliament House Vista*, Report to the National Capital Authority, The Consultants, Canberra, February 2007.

¹⁰¹ NCA SoE, para 54.

¹⁰² NCA SoE, para 59.

- 8.39 The NCA states that 'the excavated fill from the site will be transported to a suitable local site for future use.'¹⁰³
- 8.40 This site is not identified.
- 8.41 However, the NCA does have a site for a large amount of fill. It proposes to fill in Lake Burley Griffin.
- 8.42 In accordance with Amendment 61 to the National Capital Plan, the NCA proposes to fill the northern shore of West Basin at Acton to create waterfront real estate.¹⁰⁴
- 8.43 If this is indeed the site selected for the fill from Parkes Way, then it will have very significant environmental effects on the landscape and waterscape of Central Canberra.
- 8.44 In short, the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is not only a proposed public work with no public value, if approved it would have significant negative effects on the planning system, transportation system, heritage significance and environmental values of the National Capital.

¹⁰³ NCA SoE, para.74.

¹⁰⁴ National Capital Plan, Amendment 61 West Basin, p.6.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 This analysis of the proposed Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass at the Russell roundabout, Canberra ACT concludes that the stated purpose of the work is poorly conceived, poorly argued and (as publicly presented to date) poorly supported with technical data; the work is extravagant, unnecessary and counter-productive; its revenue producing capacity, as publicly-subsidised infrastructure in a major urban development, is non-existent; and its prospective public value is zero
- 9.2 The proposal raises serious concerns about the so-called 'Griffin Legacy' planning initiatives of the National Capital Authority, which are more accurately described as an ambitious program of Central National Area redevelopment. The principal purpose of the proposed \$26 million Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is presented on the basis of a Business Case for the Central National Area redevelopment, which makes clear that the work is conceived by the NCA as a public sector subsidy for large-scale property development.
- 9.3 The technical basis of the scheme has no validity, as it proposes to construct 500 m of 'freeway' conditions on Parkes Way between two sets of traffic lights.
- 9.4 The scheme is advanced on the basis of irreversible impact on the heritage values of the landscape created by the National Capital Development Commission in the 1960s; and less than forthcoming information on the environmental impact of the construction works, with a large quantity of fill to be dumped at an undisclosed location, quite possibly Lake Burley Griffin.
- 9.5 The project should not proceed.
- 9.6 A more rational, cost-effective and appropriate alternative is readily available in the form of an on-grade intersection, either a roundabout of reduced complexity or a simple 4-way intersection controlled by traffic lights.
- 9.7 This inquiry before the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works has been underway since March 2008 in a changing policy setting marked by a series of announcements. The most significant of these concerns climate change and carbon pollution reduction, which has major implications for a car-reliant city, such as Canberra. In this context, the Kings Avenue/Parkes Way overpass is not only a bad idea for Canberra and the Australian taxpayer, it is a bad idea for the planet.
- 9.8 The Walter Burley Griffin Society recommends that the Public Works Committee reject the proposal by the National Capital Authority to replace the roundabout at the intersection of Kings Avenue and Parkes Way, Russell, ACT with a \$26.6 million overpass.

Appendix 1: The Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated

Established in 1988 in Sydney, the Society – now in its twentieth year - commemorates the lives and works of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin and promotes the ideals, vision and community life they fostered in Australia. The Society aims to promote a better understanding of the lives and works of the Griffins, promoting especially the preservation and conservation of landscape designs, urban plans, buildings and other works designed by or having an association with the Griffins.

The Society has several hundred members from various parts of Australia and USA. The Canberra Chapter of the Society was established in 2004.

Committee Members 2007-2008

Patron: Professor Carrick Chambers AM

President: Professor James Weirick

Vice president: Akky Von Ogtrop

Treasurer: John Kabos

Secretary: Kerry McKillop

Management Committee: Colleen Fry, Adrienne Kabos, Martin O'Donoghue, Margaret Petrykowski, Stuart Read, Professor Geoffrey Sherington, Michael Thomson, David Turner.

Canberra Chapter Committee

Chair: Brett Odgers

Vice Chair: Dr Bruce Kent

Secretary/Treasurer: Luke Wensing

Committee members: Marion Halligan, John Stokes, Rosemarie Willett, Dr Ann Kent, Beverley Thomas Larson, Kerri Taranto

This submission has been prepared by the Society as a contribution to the public good. Neither the Society nor any individual committee member of the Society, directly or indirectly, stands to make any personal financial gain from this submission or the outcome of the Inquiry. The submission was prepared by unpaid volunteers and was funded by the Society from its own resources and was not influenced by any person or organisation external to the committees of the Society.

Professor James Weirick, President of the Society is the principal author of this submission, advised by Brett Odgers, Chair of the Canberra Chapter and members of the Management Committee – for biographical profile of Professor Weirick, see Appendix 2.

Appendix 2: Biographical Profile – Professor James Weirick

James Weirick is Professor of Landscape Architecture and Director, Urban Development & Design Program, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales.

A graduate of Harvard University, Professor Weirick taught at the Boston Architectural Center, University of Massachusetts/Boston, University of Canberra and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, prior to his appointment to UNSW in 1991. In recent years, he has conducted international urban design studios in Beijing and Tokyo with the Graduate School of Landscape Architecture, Peking University and the Graduate School of Frontier Sciences, The University of Tokyo. His research interests include the history of architecture, landscape architecture and urbanism, with an emphasis on the 'politics of design', particularly the work of Walter Burley Griffin, the history of Canberra, and the urban landscape of Sydney. He is actively engaged in issues of contemporary urbanism throughout Australia as an educator, critic, and commentator.

Professor Weirick has served on the Environment Board of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (NSW); the Parliamentary Zone Advisory Panel, National Capital Authority, Canberra; the Urban Design Advisory Committee, NSW Department of Urban Affairs & Planning; the Gateways Design Review Panel, City of Sydney; and the Campus 2010 Design Review Panel, University of Sydney. He currently serves on the Design Review Panel, Sydney Olympic Park Authority and the Design Advisory Panel of the City of Sydney.

Professor Weirick has been a member of many design competition juries, most recently as a City of Sydney representative on the Design Excellence Competitions for redevelopment of the Carlton United Brewery site, Broadway; the Westfield Sydney Centrepont Project; and the Goodsell Building Redevelopment, Chifley Square. He received the President's Award of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (NSW Group) in 1999; and was named a 'Built Environment Exemplar' in the Year of the Built Environment 2004.

Professor Weirick has been President of the Walter Burley Griffin Society, Inc. since 2004, and previously served as Vice President, 1993-2004.