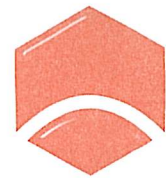


7 May 2008



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Senator Kate Lundy
Chair, JPC
Review of The National Capital Authority
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 21600

Dear Senator Lundy

Subject: Supplementary Submission: Engineers Australia (Canberra Division)

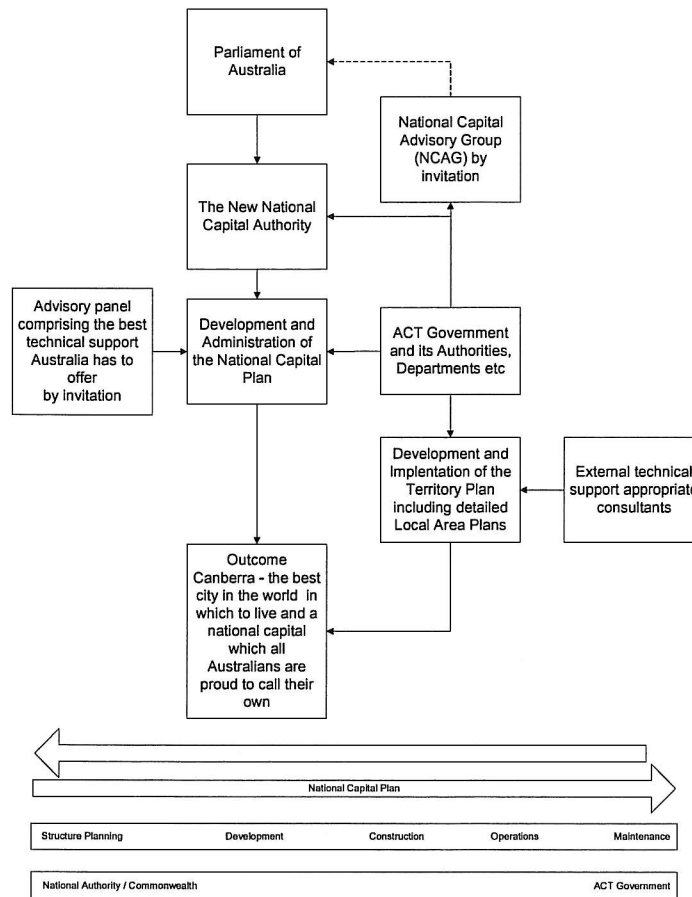
Thank you for the invitation to provide a supplementary submission to the Inquiry, specifically addressing issues raised during our hearing of 1 May 2008.

As stated at the hearing what we need is a National Capital Plan which achieves and defines:-

- a strategic framework (as the superior plan for Canberra) that provides for the development and growth of the Nations Capital. The National Capital Plan should ensure that the sustainability and security of the essential features and structure of the Griffin Plan and those developed over time by so many talented people who invested their expertise, time and effort to meet the ACT's changing needs including the Canberra Airport. The National Capital Plan should be a dynamic plan reviewed and discussed often.
- Quality of the city covering but not limited to:
 - ⇒ Operational efficiency
 - ⇒ Environmental quality
 - ⇒ Sustainability, and
 - ⇒ Visual quality
- National institutions provided in an environment and context that are both effective in meeting their individual objectives and most importantly, make all Australians proud, and
- An on-going and responsive set of activities and events which specifically relate to both Canberra's role as the National Capital and the lives of residents and the general Australian population. The National Capital functions include such events as the opening, sittings and closing of Parliament and celebrations like Australia Day, Anzac Day etc. Other events of a more local character include the Canberra Day and Multi-Cultural Festival.

How do we achieve these?

We need an organisational arrangement that recognises the need for effective integration of both the national and local objectives/needs, whilst also remaining consistent with the strategic objectives of the National Capital Plan. Such an arrangement is shown in the following organisational structure diagram.



The key features of this proposed arrangement are described in the following paragraphs:

1. Parliamentary Control

The Parliament will contribute and ultimately control the development and implementation of the National Capital Plan through a Joint House Committee similar to that undertaking this inquiry into the NCA and the former committee which oversaw and guided the National Capital Development Commission and its plans for Canberra. The National Capital Plan may also be integrated with NSW strategic plans to provide benefits to the whole region.

2. Responsibility of the National Capital Planning Authority

The new National Capital Authority should be an organisation that has the sole responsibility of the development, implementation and review of the National Capital Plan. The initial ongoing development of the Plan would be undertaken by resources managed by the new NCA and oversee by a new National Capital Advisory Group. These resources could be drawn from the ACT Government's

urban planning expertise and from related disciplines as well as private consulting companies. The staffing requirements for this organisation would therefore be:-

- a. "Powerful" professionally accredited and reputed senior management,
- b. Senior technical staff in the key disciplines of
 - i. Urban planning;
 - ii. Architecture;
 - iii. Urban design;
 - iv. Engineering (transport and services); and
 - v. Economics and finance, and
- c. Administrative support staff (see suggestion below).

This could be a much smaller organisation than the current NCA with a large proportion of the work including development approvals being undertaken by support services provided by the ACT Government and private resources, funded through a Federal Government budgetary provision. Elements that could be readily conducted by the ACT Government for the new Authority could include transport modeling to ensure compatibility with assumptions and development proposals to integrate land use and transport responsibilities, and legal advice to ensure seamless governance between the two land owners. To reduce overheads, this new Authority could be part of another department, such as the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The involvement of the ACT and the development, implementation and administration of the National Capital Plan would ensure the integration of the National Capital and Territory Plans. It is worthy to note that Sir John Overall had direct access to Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies which resulted in timely and appropriate development of the nation's capital.

3. The National Capital Advisory Group (NCAG)

To ensure that the National Capital Plan is high quality and realistic and achieves a sense of ownership by the nation as a whole, a National Capital Advisory Group should be established to advise both the Parliament and the new NCA on the National Capital Plan and its implementation. This group would comprise:

- a. The senior management and some technical staff from the Authority
- b. Experts in their relevant fields, drawn from across Australia and possibly overseas with disciplines covering at least the following:
 - i. Urban planning;
 - ii. Architecture;
 - iii. Urban design;
 - iv. Transport engineering;
 - v. Services engineering;
 - vi. Environment, and
 - vii. Business/economics, and
- c. Representatives from the States and Territories. The choice of these representatives should always be directed towards the objective of producing a National Capital of which all Australians can be proud, able to avoid State parochialism and never being an obstructive force raising Federal/State differences and conflicts. It may also be appropriate to have a representative of the adjacent New South Wales Local Government organisations as a member of the NCAG. This suggests that membership

should be at the personal invitation of the new NCA, rather than at State nomination.

4. ACT Government, Departments and Authorities

There are some good reasons why the ACT Government through some of its agencies could, and should, be involved in developing, monitoring and updating some aspects of the National Capital Plan. The two aspects of the Plan that immediately fall into this category are the analysis of structure and changes over time and the events in the ACT.

The involvement of the ACT Government in the development and maintenance of the National Capital Plan would have the very significant benefit of harmonizing the Plan with the Territory including other local planning and development policies. The obvious danger of the Plan being highly influenced by the ACT Government to suit local views, and therefore may conflict with National Capital objectives would be countered by the monitoring and review of work by both the new NCA and the NCAG.

A significant part of the work developing, maintaining and implementing the National Capital Plan could be undertaken by external consultants with the appropriate skills and capabilities under the direction of the new NCA.

5. Planning Approvals and Processes

With a well defined set of planning criteria it should be possible for a development application to be assessed by ACTPLA on behalf of the NCA. However, we caution against the adoption of the revised ACT Planning system in preference to a well defined and very specific series of planning, design and development conditions applying within areas of National Capital significance in order to ensure that the specific and required outcomes are achieved.

Engineers Australia sees no reason to change the current appeals system that is administered by the NCA. The NCA, with Parliaments approval is and should be the decision maker.

6. Other Commonwealth Interests

Canberra was planned and developed as the National Capital by the Commonwealth and is reliant upon a planned level of self contained employment to reduce car travel within the Central National Area and to promote an efficient public transport system. To this end it is essential that the new National Capital Authority has control over the structure of the City and the achievement of the planned structure of dispersed and self contained Town Centres. As such the new Authority should have a significant input into the distribution of Commonwealth employment in the Nations Capital to the extent of defining the distribution of Commonwealth Government jobs in the Territory. The Commonwealth would have the task of implementing the distribution of departments.

The airport development should also be placed directly under the control of the new Authority to allow a balance between the functional needs of the airport and those of the Commonwealth and Territory interests.

7 Lake Burley Griffin

The members of this enquiry specifically asked that Engineers Australia respond to planning and management issues of Lake Burley Griffin.

Lake Burley Griffin is an essential infrastructure element of the Parliamentary Triangle. It is crucial therefore that development controls applying to the Lake and its environs are under the National Capital Plan to maintain this uncompromised function. Further, although initially constructed as an ornamental and recreational lake it has become an invaluable environmental control mechanism to achieve high water quality for down stream areas. This also is an essential function that should not be compromised. The recreational use could and should be enhanced by a small adjustment to its shape along the western foreshore to achieve a rowing course of international standard commensurate with the presence of the AIS in Canberra.

In terms of Lake management we believe that there are advantages in the Territory undertaking some management and maintenance functions on behalf of the new NCA. This is particularly so with the control of the flood gates on Scrivener Dam where the impacts of water release from the Lake impacts on ACT assets, infrastructure and residents downstream.

Yours sincerely



Tom Brimson
Deputy President
Canberra Division