



May 22, 2003

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee  
on the National Capital and External Territories  
Department of House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Australia

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to comment on the Joint Committee's inquiry on the role of the National Capital Authority. As the Executive Director of the National Capital Planning Commission in Washington, D.C., I head the Authority's counterpart agency in the United States. Additionally, last year I joined with Annabelle Pegrum and our colleagues from the planning authorities in Ottawa and Brasilia to launch the Capitals Alliance, a policy forum on the urban design and development issues that affect national capital cities. I would like to offer my views on the unique role of federal planning organizations in meeting the development needs of national capitals and their special relationship with their local and Territory governments.

The Authority is charged with the planning and development of Canberra and the Territory in a manner commensurate with their national significance. This stewardship role requires the Authority to guide comprehensive planning to best meet the current and future needs of the Commonwealth. In this respect, the National Capital Authority is similar to my agency in Washington. Both of our organizations seek to assert professional and "hands-on" management of critical land-use and development issues that affect the image and function of the national government.

From my meetings last year in Canberra with Authority leaders as well as the local planning and Territory representatives, I recognized the evolving and dynamic relationship between the Authority and the local and Territorial establishment. Like my organization in Washington, the Authority seeks to advance Commonwealth interests in a way that contributes to local planning and development objectives. Because the short-term development needs of the Territory are in some instances different from the longer-term interests of the Commonwealth, it cannot be expected that these objectives will always coincide.

Committee Secretary

Page Two

In Washington, we have learned to build on those differences and seek ways that development initiatives can be shaped to benefit both federal and local constituencies. My agency has forged strong ties with the District of Columbia government and we are currently working with our city colleagues on projects that meet federal needs while contributing to the surrounding local communities. I know that the leadership of the National Capital Authority has been seeking creative ways to build similar synergies.

I have been highly impressed with the professional, knowledgeable leadership of the National Capital Authority, its clear sense of mission, and its dedication to plan and develop a national capital worthy of the values and aspirations of the Australian people.

Sincerely,

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP  
Executive Director