

## The Issues

### Introduction

2.1 Much of the current problem facing the Parliamentary Zone has been attributed to the 'Y-Plan' regime adopted by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in the 1960s and the reluctance of planners to shift away from the strategic planning principles that continue to guide Canberra's development.<sup>1</sup> The Y-Plan, so-called because "the metropolitan growth of Canberra is based on the development of separate urban districts or towns, in a linear arrangement in the form of a 'Y'",<sup>2</sup> also provided for large volumes of traffic to be carried on a peripheral parkway system.<sup>3</sup> As one submission describes, the Y-Plan was:

...built on the premise that motor cars were affordable, cheap, desirable and here to stay. Canberra grew around the high-speed highways that cars needed, and quickly outstripped the potential for public transport to compete.<sup>4</sup>

2.2 A 1997 study by the Conservation Council of the South East Region criticised the way ACT planners have continued to accommodate an increasing demand for private vehicle commuting:

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1 Bruce Wright, *ACT's Planning Stuck in Mid-1960s*, Canberra Times, 22 April 2003, p 11.  
2 National Capital Development Commission, *Metropolitan Canberra Policy Plan Development Plan*, July 1984, p 24.  
3 National Capital Development Commission, *Metropolitan Canberra Policy Plan Development Plan*, July 1984, p 24.  
4 Michael Richards, Submissions, p 27.

Apart from Walter Burley Griffin himself, Canberra's planners have never seriously considered any future other than one completely dominated by the car. The freeway network was always envisaged as providing the arteries of communication between towns. And so it remains today.<sup>5</sup>

- 2.3 The Committee also examined evidence which notes a recent decline in public transport access and the way this has contributed to a city dominated by cars:

In recent years ... one of the central design elements of Griffin's vision – that of creating a city that embodied the Australian democratic ideals of equity and fairness, has been eroded through the loss of good public transport access to the central areas. Ironically, this diminished access may primarily be attributed to the ever increasing use of that universal symbol of modern mobility and 'freedom' – the private vehicle.<sup>6</sup>

- 2.4 In examining the NCA's proposal and the evidence received by the Committee, a number of issues became apparent. The Committee agrees that there are significant problems relating to parking in the Parliamentary Zone that need to be addressed. These problems relate to overcrowding, a lack of alternatives to private vehicle commuting and the isolation of major buildings and attractions from essential services. The Committee is also concerned about the possible implications a pay parking system would have for visitors to the national cultural institutions in the Zone as well as for volunteers, researchers and people with disabilities.

## Implementation Issues

- 2.5 The NCA has informed the Committee that it plans to align the introduction of pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone with the ACT Government's decision to introduce on-street (kerbside) pay parking in the Barton/Forrest region. The Authority acknowledges that any parking strategy for the Parliamentary Zone must take the situation in the adjacent Barton/Forrest office area into consideration and "be consistent with, and complementary to, policies adopted for those areas by the ACT Government".<sup>7</sup>

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5 Conservation Council of the South East Region, *Canberra at the Crossroads: A Way Out of the Transport Mess*, October 1997, p 10.

6 John Lauder, Submissions, p 132.

7 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 104.

- 2.6 The NCA maintains that introducing pay parking in one area, but not the other, would be likely to create an unwanted overflow of commuters in the Parliamentary Zone as they seek to avoid parking charges.<sup>8</sup> The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFFA) also acknowledges this concern, emphasising that if there is not a joint approach to implement parking policy in the Zone and the adjacent areas, “all we will see is a migration from one to the other of people seeking free parking”.<sup>9</sup>
- 2.7 The ACT Government believes that even on-street pay parking, if introduced in the Barton/Forrest area, could have “an immediate and possibly severe impact” on parking in the Parliamentary Zone.<sup>10</sup> The Committee also acknowledges concerns that the implementation of pay parking in Barton/Forrest is likely to generate greater competition for spaces in the car parks of the national institutions in the Zone, as well as contributing to the problem of people parking illegally.
- 2.8 Despite recognition from the two authorities of the need to introduce parking regimes that are complimentary, the Committee remains concerned about the implications which could arise from having two separate parking regimes divided by a single road. While the NCA maintains that both governments are committed to managing the overall transport task in an integrated and sustainable way, the Committee understands that there is a significant contrast between the two authorities regarding the motivation behind the parking strategies and the outcomes being pursued. On one hand, the ACT Government is hoping to introduce pay parking infrastructure consistent with other town centres in the ACT as part of the overall Sustainable Transport Plan to encourage public transport commuting. The ACT Government confirmed its intention when appearing before the Committee:
- One of the incentives is to send signals to people by making sure the cost of parking is understood by people and can be seen as an offset against a bus ticket.<sup>11</sup>
- 2.9 The NCA, on the other hand, proposes to introduce parking fees which will improve the management of parking in the Zone but will not be severe enough to deter visitors to the national institutions. The Committee does not envisage that proposed parking charges for each area would be the same and, even if they were, it would be highly unlikely that they

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8 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 93.

9 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 66.

10 ACT Government, Submissions, p 315.

11 ACT Government, Transcript, 13 August 2003, pp 108-109.

would change in unison over time. The Committee anticipates that as a result, the Parliamentary Zone would be further affected by commuters from the adjacent Barton/Forrest area seeking to avoid greater parking fees. The Committee believes that solving the implementation issues is critical to ensuring that pay parking will be an effective tool to manage the traffic related problems affecting the Zone.

- 2.10 The NCA claims that the level of parking charges will take into account the rates applying in the Barton/Forrest areas when introduced by the ACT Government and be equitable with charges elsewhere in Canberra. The NCA states that for employee parking:

It is intended that a single charge will apply that will enable movement in and out of the Parliamentary Zone on the same business day without incurring additional cost.<sup>12</sup>

- 2.11 The NCA also claims that visitors will be able to move from one area to another without additional charge.<sup>13</sup> However, the infrastructure which would accommodate these schemes has not been presented to the Committee. Instead, the NCA has indicated there are a number of options which could be considered if the principle of pay parking in the Zone were to be approved.

## The Consultation Process

- 2.12 Although the NCA has informed the Committee that it has engaged in consultation with the national institutions in the Parliamentary Zone, the Committee has received evidence which suggests that this consultation has not been adequate. The NCA states that consultation with the national cultural institutions in the Zone on the principle of pay parking was held in 1999.<sup>14</sup> Further rounds of consultation occurred following the release of the *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report* during May 2000 and December 2000.<sup>15</sup> According to the NCA, a letter was sent to each of the institutions on 5 March 2003 seeking their confirmation of support for the introduction of pay parking in the Zone.<sup>16</sup> An Implementation Working Group involving representatives from the institutions has also been

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12 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 111.

13 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 111.

14 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 115.

15 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 115.

16 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 116.

formed and has met once, on 14 February 2003.<sup>17</sup> Further meetings have been delayed pending the outcomes of the Committee's inquiry.

- 2.13 The Committee is concerned that the institutions do not appear to have been involved in the consideration and development of the proposal. Instead, they were kept informed of what the NCA was planning to introduce by way of a new parking regime. When appearing before the Committee, the National Archives noted this lack of involvement of the national institutions in the consultation process:

...(the NCA) held a meeting, and they invited the cultural institutions to attend to brief us on what they were proposing... we did not agree with their submission that pay parking should be introduced.<sup>18</sup>

- 2.14 The National Archives' claim is strongly refuted by the NCA which argues that their comments are "not factual".<sup>19</sup> The NCA contends that "there has been considerable consultation with the different institutions over the years".<sup>20</sup> The Committee believes it is essential that, as key stakeholders, the national institutions are heavily involved in the development of any proposal which is likely to impact on their visitors, staff and volunteers. The issue of consultation is particularly significant in light of recent controversy surrounding the siting of the centenary of women's suffrage artwork, which appears to highlight shortcomings in the consultation processes employed by the NCA.

## Current Parking Provision Policies

- 2.15 Most submissions and witnesses were critical of the way in which the current problems associated with parking in the Parliamentary Zone and the adjacent Barton/Forrest area have been allowed to deteriorate. The CPSU suggested that there has not been sufficient planning foresight in providing adequate parking for both visitors and staff in the Zone and the adjacent Barton/Forrest office area.<sup>21</sup> Of further concern to the Committee is the NCA's *Indicative Development Plan* for the Parliamentary Zone which provides for future structural development to take place on existing surface car parks. There is a need to introduce measures to counteract the

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17 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 116.

18 National Archives of Australia, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 59.

19 National Capital Authority, Transcript, 13 August 2003, p 128.

20 National Capital Authority, Transcript, 13 August 2003, p 128.

21 Community and Public Sector Union, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 3.

current parking problems before any further reduction of surface parking is considered.

- 2.16 The National Capital Plan provides that on-site parking in the Barton precinct shall be provided at a rate of 1 space per 100 square metres of gross floor area for new offices approved throughout the Central National Area (Barton).<sup>22</sup> The ratio at which parking is to be provided for new buildings in the Barton precinct is part of a policy to encourage greater use of public transport and is commensurate with policies implemented in other areas of commercial development in Canberra. The ACT Government acknowledges that the NCA's restriction of parking to less than that which is actually required, has increased demand for surface parking:

The NCA has allowed new developments to construct one space on site and one space off site per 100 square metres. This has resulted, over time, in increasing demand for off-site parking.<sup>23</sup>

- 2.17 The Committee is deeply concerned that this policy appears to be contributing directly to the encroachment of commuter traffic within the Parliamentary Zone and that the problem will only increase with new development in the Barton/Forrest area. This concern is confirmed by the NCA itself, which states that:

As additional office development occurs in the Barton/Forrest area it can be expected that demand for parking in the Parliamentary Zone will further increase.<sup>24</sup>

- 2.18 The Authority conducted surveys to measure pedestrian movement across the Zone. The results confirmed that there were few movements across Commonwealth Avenue on the western side of the Zone but significant movements across Kings Avenue on the eastern side of the Zone, indicating that there are already a significant number of employees from the Barton area who are using parking provided in the Zone. While the Committee appreciates that the current parking provisions are in place to encourage public transport use, it believes the respective authorities should recognise that office workers in the Barton precinct do not have access to the same facilities that workers in the other town centres enjoy. The owners of private vehicles will, therefore, continue to create further demand for parking in this area.

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22 National Capital Authority, *Consolidated National Capital Plan*, February 2002, p 237.

23 ACT Government, *Submissions*, p 316.

24 National Capital Authority, *Submissions*, p 379.

## Alternative Modes of Transport

2.19 Given that one of the major objectives behind the proposal for pay parking is to encourage a shift from private vehicle use to public transport commuting, the Committee believes it is important to assess the viability of public transport as a means for accessing the Parliamentary Zone, as well as other sustainable modes of travel. Firstly, the Committee acknowledges that Canberra was designed as a city where the predominant mode of travel would be by car. The Chief Executive of the ACTION Authority<sup>25</sup>, Mr Guy Thurston, highlights the many barriers to promoting public transport commuting in the ACT:

We are dealing with a city which has the highest car ownership in the country, the highest two-car ownership in the country, the highest income in the country, the least traffic congestion and the cheapest parking. So there are a number of issues there which do not lend themselves to good usage of public transport.<sup>26</sup>

2.20 More than half of the submissions received make reference to the inadequacy of the current state of public transport servicing the Zone and therefore question the viability of Canberra's bus network as an alternative to private vehicle use. The predominant view from employees in the Parliamentary Zone is that the state of public transport servicing the Zone is generally substandard, with the current bus system being described as:

...appallingly inadequate...slow, inflexible and underutilised...disorganised during peak times and inadequate out of peak times.<sup>27</sup>

As one employee in the Barton area argues:

We have inherited a city built for cars and workers who are now forced to use their cars should not be punished for using them in the absence of a decent public transport system.<sup>28</sup>

2.21 These claims are contested by the ACTION Authority, which states that the bus service is "comprehensive" and that a "lack of understanding" of the bus routes by the people in the Parliamentary Zone could be

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25 The ACT Internal Omnibus Network, or ACTION Buses, is Canberra's public transport system.

26 ACT Government, Transcript, 13 August 2003, p 110.

27 Boughey, Graham, Richards, Submissions.

28 Adam Kirk, Submissions, p 235.

responsible for the negative remarks attributed throughout submissions.<sup>29</sup> ACTION believes that this lack of knowledge is impacting on the confidence people have in the public transport system.<sup>30</sup> These comments from the ACTION Authority incited further criticism of the service, in the form of additional submissions, from employees in the Zone and the adjacent Barton/Forrest area.

- 2.22 The primary reason as to why public transport commuting is undesirable, is that it simply adds too much time to travel. For most commuters, travelling to or from the Zone via the bus network involves catching a minimum of two buses, often with substantial waiting times during the changeover. The Committee understands that this can place unmanageable time constraints on employees. This is consistent with the ACT Planning and Land Authority's finding that:

...a key factor in getting more people using non-car modes of transport is to make public transport more attractive to use. Price signals (i.e. the fare cost), frequency and reliability are all important but, interestingly, research shows that the biggest factor for Canberrans is travel time, that is, the trip time and the time to get to and from the service.<sup>31</sup>

- 2.23 In its study *Canberra at the Crossroads: A Way Out of the Transport Mess*, the Conservation Council of the South East Region was critical of the way public transport in Canberra had been allowed to deteriorate. The Council argued that:

The inadequacies of public transport are very much due to the fact that it has never been given a fair go: it has been under-funded and always given second place to roads.

The high cost of freeways leaves insufficient funds to provide quality public transport, while the competition offered by the freeway network keeps patronage low.

Finally, the heavy traffic, wide roads and spread-out city centre created by car-based transport policies discourage walking and cycling, as well as creating an unattractive civic centre.<sup>32</sup>

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29 ACT Government, Transcript, 13 August 2003, pp 109 - 110.

30 ACT Government, Transcript, 13 August 2003, p 110.

31 ACT Planning and Land Management, *Sustainable Transport for the ACT: An Issues Paper*, June 2003, p 5.

32 Conservation Council of the South East Region, *Canberra at the Crossroads: A Way Out of the Transport Mess*, October 1997, pp 14-15.



- 2.24 In response to the questions posed by the Committee at the public hearing on 9 May 2003,<sup>33</sup> the secretariat has received over 600 emails. The responses from 456 respondents have been incorporated into Table 2.1 and Table 2.2. Of the employees who responded, 96 per cent travelled to work on 9 May in a private vehicle, while a variety of reasons were cited for opting not to commute via public transport. These included length of travel, insufficient services outside of peak hours and the need for a private vehicle throughout the day.
- 2.25 Another issue brought to the Committee's attention was personal safety and, in particular, the lack of lighting at bus stops in the Parliamentary Zone. This has raised security concerns for staff – particularly female staff – who work late hours and do not feel comfortable waiting for buses in the dark. According to the CPSU, the issue of security has resulted in some agencies in the Zone employing security guards to escort employees to their cars.<sup>34</sup>
- 2.26 Although public transport may provide alternative modes of travel for employees who work a regular nine to five shift, employees who work irregular or longer hours face very few options as public transport services outside of peak periods arrive at sporadic intervals. As the CPSU noted, “the ‘standard’ day of nine to five is not standard in the Australian Public Service” and therefore employees wishing to commute by bus face great difficulties in this regard.<sup>35</sup>
- 2.27 Thirty respondents to the Committee's 9 May survey claimed that bus fares were too expensive and that it was more economically viable to drive to work. However, the Committee noted that in most instances this related to Queanbeyan residents who are charged substantially higher fees than ACT residents for bus travel. The Committee also noted that 19 per cent of respondents resided outside the ACT and therefore had little or no access to public transport services. Perhaps the strongest argument in opposition to the NCA's proposal is the CPSU's suggestion that pay parking will not necessarily provide the answer to the current problems of overflow in the Zone:

Most employees in the Parliamentary Zone and adjacent areas who currently use their car to get to and from work indicate that

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33 The questions asked by the Committee were:  
a) Did you travel to work today via public transport?  
b) If not, why not?  
c) Which suburb do you commute from?

34 Community and Public Sector Union, Submissions, p 63.

35 Community and Public Sector Union, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 10.

**Table 2.1 Mode of transport used by employees on 9 May 2003**

<b>Location</b>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Private Vehicle</i>	<i>Public Transport</i>	<i>Rode / Walked</i>
Belconnen	97	96	1	0
Gungahlin	33	31	2	0
Inner City	65	56	3	6
Outside ACT	87	86	1	0
Tuggeranong	98	95	3	0
Weston Creek	38	38	0	0
Woden Valley	38	35	3	0
Totals (% of respondents)	456	437 (95.8%)	13 (2.9%)	6 (1.3%)

Source Committee Survey, 9 May 2003

**Table 2.2 Reasons\* for employees not using public transport on 9 May 2003.**

<b>Location</b>	<i>Takes Too Long</i>	<i>Family Commitments</i>	<i>Work Outside Peak Hour</i>	<i>Need Car at Lunch</i>	<i>Health/Safety Reasons</i>	<i>Fares too Expensive</i>	<i>No Buses Available</i>
Belconnen	67	21	28	21	9	9	1
Gungahlin	19	6	6	9	4	2	6
Inner City	30	17	8	21	4	4	4
Outside ACT	17	22	12	11	5	8	41
Tuggeranong	67	26	17	25	16	4	2
Weston Creek	26	10	4	18	2	3	1
Woden Valley	18	16	7	10	3	0	2
Totals (% of respondents)	244 (53.5%)	118 (25.9%)	82 (18.0%)	115 (25.2%)	43 (9.4%)	30 (6.6%)	57 (12.5%)

Source Committee Survey, 9 May 2003

\* Note: Most respondents gave multiple reasons for not commuting via public transport

they will be unable to use alternatives to their cars even if pay parking is introduced.<sup>36</sup>

- 2.28 In spite of the ACT Government's *Sustainable Transport Plan*, the Committee is concerned that although the NCA's proposal seeks to reduce private vehicle commuting for work purposes, in reality, employees in the Zone are unlikely to be presented with viable alternatives. One measure raised during the gathering of evidence which may assist in relieving the traffic pressures currently affecting the Parliamentary Zone would be to discourage single occupant vehicle travel by encouraging car-pooling. This practice was not addressed in great detail in the evidence. However, given that car-pooling requires a significant shift in attitude and behaviour, it is unlikely to provide an immediate solution to the parking issues currently facing the Zone.

## Private Vehicle Dependency

- 2.29 Ms Kathryn Graham suggests that any comparisons between the Parliamentary Zone and other town centres such as Civic and Woden are "invalid" because these centres not only operate as a central hub for public transport, but also offer access to a wide range of services and retail outlets for employees who park and work there.<sup>37</sup> This view is shared by many employees in the Parliamentary Zone, including Mr Rob Millington who argues that:

Pay parking for people working in the Zone cannot be justified as it offers little if anything for the consumer apart from being able to attend work.<sup>38</sup>

- 2.30 People working in the Parliamentary Zone and adjacent areas require private vehicles to fulfil family commitments and to access services such as banking facilities, pharmacies and catering establishments. The Committee heard evidence from employees who drive to work in the Zone despite living well within walking distance, simply because they need to run errands at lunch time or they need to be able to attend work-related meetings promptly. The CPSU surveyed over five hundred of its members. One of the questions it asked respondents is why they need a car during the day. According to the CPSU, the responses included

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36 Community and Public Sector Union, Submissions, p 48.

37 Ms Kathryn Graham, Submissions, p 36.

38 Mr Rob Millington, Submissions, p 17.

banking, shopping, child care, family responsibilities and other personal business.<sup>39</sup>

- 2.31 A large proportion of those employed in the area travel to work from areas outside of Canberra which are either serviced very infrequently by public transport or are not serviced at all. The Committee is concerned that although the NCA's proposal provides that "structured car parks will include some convenient amenities, such as dry cleaners, newsagents and flower shops",<sup>40</sup> these services are not likely to satisfy the essential day-to-day needs of those employed in the Parliamentary Zone. In addition, the land use provisions of the National Capital Plan do not allow for anything resembling a shopping centre to be erected in the Zone.<sup>41</sup> For people working in the Zone, the use of a private vehicle is therefore necessary.

## The Impact on Visitors

- 2.32 The Committee has received evidence from representatives of the national cultural institutions located in the Parliamentary Zone, all of whom shared concerns about the effects the proposed parking policy is likely to impose on their visitors. The CPSU provided evidence which suggests that the length of time visitors spend at the national institutions in the Zone is increasing.<sup>42</sup> Should pay parking be introduced, the desired outcome for the cultural institutions would involve some form of mechanism which ensures visitors would still be able to enjoy free parking adjacent to their buildings. While the institutions also share concerns on behalf of their employees, their principle concern is the needs of their visiting public.
- 2.33 Despite claims from the NCA that pay parking would help to improve the visitor experience, the National Archives of Australia does not see pay parking as having a positive impact in the Zone. The Archives argues that:

There is little support for the notion that pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone is good public policy. The assertion that the introduction of pay parking in the 'place of the people' would improve the visitor experience and reduce the use of motor vehicles will do little to gain sympathy among those seriously affected by the policy.<sup>43</sup>

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39 Community and Public Sector Union, Transcript, May 9 2003, p 10.

40 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 41.

41 National Capital Authority, Transcript, 13 August, p 131.

42 Community and Public Sector Union, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 4.

43 National Archives of Australia, Submissions, p 82.

2.34 The Director of the National Gallery, Dr Brian Kennedy, also pointed out that with the current parking restrictions it is the visiting public who are the most affected:

...those who complain (about incurring fines) are those who become utterly absorbed in our exhibition...who get lost in time looking at wonderful pictures.<sup>44</sup>

## **The Impact on Volunteers, Researchers and People with Disabilities**

2.35 In a scenario where everyone pays for parking, the NCA states that it is “most likely” that the cost of providing free parking to specific groups such as volunteers, researchers and people with disabilities would have to be borne by the cultural institutions themselves.<sup>45</sup> The imposition of an additional cost for parking would be an unwelcome burden on those institutions already affected by cuts in government funding. The Committee considers this situation to be unacceptable.

2.36 The Committee is concerned about the effects pay parking might have on volunteers, researchers and people with disabilities. The National Library has indicated that half of its readers are either researchers, senior citizens or the unemployed.<sup>46</sup> Many of the volunteers are on low incomes and parking charges could have a considerable impact on whether they continue to offer their services. Similarly, the introduction of pay parking is likely to discourage students using the national institutions.<sup>47</sup>

2.37 Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery (OPH/NPG) is opposed to any system which has negative impacts on staff and particularly volunteers, who it describes as “the lifeblood of our exhibitions and presentations”.<sup>48</sup> The Committee received a submission on behalf of volunteer workers from institutions such as the National Gallery of Australia, Old Parliament House, Questacon and the National Library. The volunteers’ aim is to protect their present capacity for free parking in the Parliamentary Zone. They point out that:

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44 National Gallery of Australia, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 91.

45 National Capital Authority, Transcript, 13 August 2003, p 140.

46 National Library of Australia, Submissions, p 23.

47 Community and Public Sector Union, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 4.

48 Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 74.

Contact with our own members has made it clear that a significant number would consider whether they wished to continue working as volunteers if they were asked to make a regular payment out of their already limited income.<sup>49</sup>

- 2.38 The Volunteers group suggested the introduction of a ticketing system, currently adopted by the ACT Government, which enables volunteers to park for free in pay parking areas controlled by the Territory. The volunteers believe that “such a system would work equally well in the Parliamentary Zone”.<sup>50</sup>
- 2.39 The NCA recognises that the cultural institutions in the Parliamentary Zone are assisted in their operations by volunteers. The NCA itself makes use of a number of volunteers to assist in its activities. The Authority stresses that its proposed parking strategy will provide appropriate spaces for the operational needs of the cultural institutions. The Authority also identifies the need to accommodate the parking demands of volunteers who attend at various hours of the day.<sup>51</sup> However, the Committee has not been presented with a concrete proposal which would cover the parking needs of volunteers, researchers and people with disabilities in the Parliamentary Zone.

## Equity and the ‘User Pays’ Principle

- 2.40 In the *Parliamentary Zone Review: Outcomes Report*, the NCA states its intention to introduce pay parking “where commuters are displacing visitors”.<sup>52</sup> The NCA believes that providing parking in the Zone involves an ongoing management cost that should be equitably borne by the user. According to the Authority, “pay parking would contribute funds to offset the maintenance of car parks and roads in the Parliamentary Zone, which at present escape the ‘user-pays’ principle”.<sup>53</sup>
- 2.41 The Property Council of Australia (ACT Division) supports the principle of pay parking in all employment zones on the basis that there needs to be equity between all employees in the ACT.<sup>54</sup> The Property Council believes

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49 Volunteers of National Institutions, Submissions, p 351.

50 Volunteers of National Institutions, Submissions, p 351.

51 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 103.

52 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 41.

53 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 41.

54 Property Council of Australia (ACT), Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 41.

a parking charge will bring Barton in line with Civic and the other areas of high employment in the ACT.

- 2.42 Despite the notion presented in the Parliamentary Zone Review that the car parking initiative will “balance the needs of the visitor with those of the commuter in a fair and equitable manner”,<sup>55</sup> employees in the Zone are adamant that this is not the case. One employee, Mr David Boughey, states that he is “bemused” by the Review’s concept of equity:

...(the NCA’s) proposal that workers pay for parking while visitors do not, would appear to be most inequitable if the objective is to ensure that the cost of the service is borne by the user.<sup>56</sup>

- 2.43 Mr Phil Hambly points out that the proposed initiative will only be of benefit to visitors to the Zone and senior executive staff “who will both avoid the need to park through preferential treatment”.<sup>57</sup> The argument presented in the Review that ‘user pays’ is considered by Mr Rob Millington to be “a very thin argument” in view of his perception that pay parking would target only one group – public servants.<sup>58</sup>

## **Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT)**

- 2.44 The NCA have advised the Committee that a feasibility study carried out for pay parking indicated that the appropriate level of charges would be lower than the threshold under which the FBT accrues.<sup>59</sup> The NCA also states that FBT is only an issue for those provided with free-parking in an area where pay parking applies:

Specifically, FBT is payable if, within a one-kilometre radius of the premises on which the car is parked, there is a commercial parking station that charges a few for all day parking which is more than the car parking threshold.

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55 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 41.

56 David Boughey, Submissions, p 38.

57 Phil Hambly, Submissions, p 242.

58 Rob Millington, Submissions, p 242.

59 National Capital Authority, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories: Parliamentary Zone Parking Policy*, June 2002, p 6.

A commercial car parking station is defined as one that charges a fee for all-day parking, is permanent, and is commercial (i.e. operated with a view to making a profit).<sup>60</sup>

- 2.45 The Presiding Officers of the Parliament of Australia ask that the Committee consider the possible liability for FBT on the Parliamentary departments and the Parliament if a change to the current parking provision for occupants of Parliament House is made, noting that this cost was assessed as at least \$600,000 in the 1994 inquiry into a proposal for pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone.<sup>61</sup>

## Shuttle Bus

- 2.46 The *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report* proposes that a shuttle bus be introduced which would allow visitors to leave their cars at one destination and yet still have the opportunity to visit each of the national attractions situated within the Parliamentary Zone. The report also states that “the presence of shuttle buses may also increase demand for links to other parts of the Central National Area”.<sup>62</sup> The NCA argue that the intended benefits of the shuttle bus service include that it would:

- reduce the demand for car trips within the Parliamentary Zone;
- move people from the more remote car parks to their place of work;
- provide increased personal safety;
- provide an opportunity to promote the national institutions; and
- make travel between the national institutions easier for visitors.<sup>63</sup>

- 2.47 Representatives from OPH/NPG informed the Committee of a shuttle bus service which the institution trialled for approximately three months which operated between its building and new Parliament House. The service was discontinued due to low levels of usage and OPH/NPG found that people were “quite happy to park at Parliament House and then drive down to Old Parliament House or elsewhere”.<sup>64</sup> OPH/NPG also reported that 89 per cent of its 170,000 visitors each year arrive by car, and that the

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60 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 121.

61 Presiding Officers, Submissions, p 309.

62 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 42.

63 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 597.

64 Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 82.



remaining eleven per cent are primarily school students who arrive by the bus load.<sup>65</sup>

- 2.48 Mr John Lauder points out that in order to maximise the value of a shuttle bus as an effective transport management tool, “its operational route should be extended beyond the Zone to form a direct link with the major transport trunk routes and interchange in Civic”.<sup>66</sup> He suggests that the shuttle bus should aim to serve both the commuter and visitor markets.

## Environmental & Heritage Issues

- 2.49 The NCA’s pay parking policy is aimed at reducing the number of cars entering the Zone and increasing the use of public transport. The initiative is also said to be consistent with the National Greenhouse Strategy. The Parliamentary Zone Review states that:

the parking initiative is an important step toward applying more sustainable management and development practices and in establishing a ‘greener’ Zone.<sup>67</sup>

- 2.50 The CPSU points out that section 5.6 of the National Greenhouse Strategy provides for the implementation of mechanisms which “reduce the extent of all-day commuter parking in major centres which experience congested approach roads and with accessible public transport”.<sup>68</sup> The Union therefore emphasises that the reasons why employees are unable to switch from private vehicle use to public transport are critical to the debate regarding pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone.
- 2.51 Environment Australia states that it “supports measures to reduce the impact of greenhouse gas emissions”.<sup>69</sup> However, the Department asks the Committee to consider the infrastructure within the Parliamentary Zone and to determine whether pay parking would actually result in an increase in public transport commuting.
- 2.52 The Australian Heritage Commission brought to the Committee’s attention the heritage significance of the Parliamentary Vista and points out that it has a role to play in providing advice to agencies such as the NCA. The Commission noted that:

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65 Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery, Transcript, 9 May 2003, p 81.

66 John Lauder, Submissions, p 182.

67 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 40.

68 Community and Public Sector Union, Submissions, p 46.

69 Environment Australia, Submissions, p 83.

The *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* requires Commonwealth proponents of an action, likely to have a significant effect on a place entered in the Register of National Estate, to consult the Commission prior to taking any action.

The Commission considers that any action likely to result in physical changes in the Parliamentary Zone, such as policies supporting the construction of multi-level car parks, would have a significant effect on national estate values.<sup>70</sup>

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70 Australian Heritage Commission, Submissions, p 320.