

c/- The Secretary
140 Edinburgh Road
Castlecrag, NSW 2068
3 June 2013

Senator Louise Pratt
Committee Chair
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Senator Pratt,

**Inquiry into the Provision of Amenity
within the Parliamentary Triangle**

The Walter Burley Griffin Society thanks the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories for the opportunity to make a submission to the current inquiry on the provision of amenity in the Parliamentary Triangle.

1.0 Paid Parking on National Land in the Parliamentary Triangle

- 1.1 The Society supports the strategic direction of the Australian Government decision to introduce paid parking on National Land in Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton, as announced in the 2013–2014 Budget.
- 1.2 The use of prime sites in the symbolic centre of Canberra for free surface car parking has concerned the Society for many years on the principle that a higher and better use for this land would be building the National Capital, not maintaining large empty spaces in the Parliamentary Triangle, and subsidising car dependency in Canberra as a consequence.

- 1.3 However, the Society is concerned that the parking fees and fines generated by the new policy will be directed to Consolidated Revenue. We strongly recommend that the money raised from Paid Parking in the Parliamentary Triangle be directed to support public transport in Inner Canberra serving the areas previously provided with free surface car parking.
- 1.4 Improved public transport in the Parliamentary Triangle is clearly the solution to the issue of accessibility to shops and other amenities, which forms the basis of the current inquiry.
- 1.5 The Centenary Bus Loop introduced by the ACT Government this year for tourist purposes demonstrates the benefit of a readily accessible shuttle service between Civic and the Parliamentary Triangle. This service should be established on a sound, permanent basis with increased frequency in periods of peak demand to provide access to the established amenities of Inner Canberra (Civic, Kingston, Manuka), which offer a range of retail services together with the advantages of competitive pricing that no stand-alone facility in the Parliamentary Zone and surrounding office employment areas could match
- 1.6 Given the extensive and increasing use of on-line services in retailing worldwide, the Society questions whether the need for physical use of retail facilities in 21st century Canberra should be a major determinant of urban policy and spatial planning.

2.0 The Parliamentary Triangle and the Parliamentary Zone

- 2.1 If the inquiry finds there is a need and a commercial rationale for ‘convenience store’ facilities to augment the shuttle bus service recommended above, the Society urges the adoption of different siting and design guidelines for the Parliamentary Zone than for areas beyond the Parliamentary Zone in Barton, Russell and Acton.
- 2.2 The Parliamentary Zone is defined in the *Parliament Act* 1974, (as amended by the *Parliamentary Precincts Act* 1988). It comprises the land bounded by Kings Avenue, Capital Circle, Commonwealth Avenue and the southern shore of Lake Burley Griffin. (Figure 1)
- 2.3 As stated in the NCA *Parliamentary Zone Review: outcomes report* (2000, p.80), the Parliamentary Triangle is not ‘delineated in any statutory sense . . . in essence, the three points of Capital Hill, City Hill and the Russell Apex, and the connecting avenues of Commonwealth, Kings and Constitution define the triangle.’
- 2.4 For the purposes of the current inquiry, the term ‘Parliamentary Triangle’ is inadequate, as it excludes Barton and Acton that are subject to the new Paid Parking Policy. The Society interprets the Terms of Reference to include the area mapped in the *Parking Management on National Land* Fact Sheet issued by the NCA in 2013. This area extends beyond Parkes and Russell to include Barton and Acton. (Figure 2)

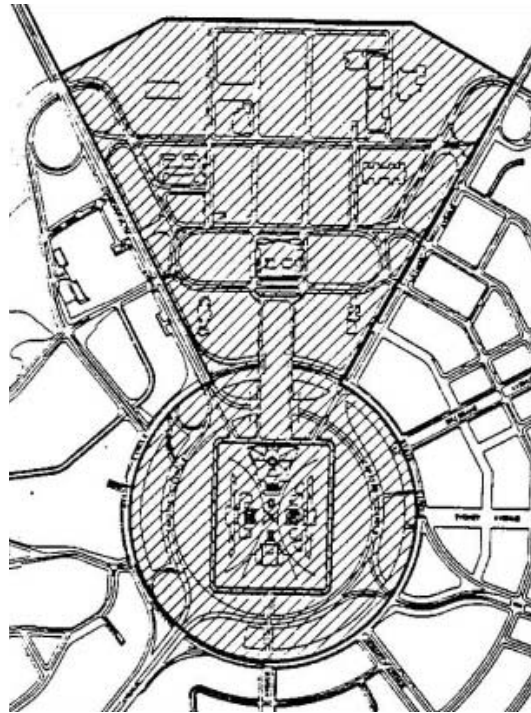


Figure 1. Parliamentary Zone defined in the *Parliament Act 1974*, (as amended by the *Parliamentary Precincts Act 1988*). (Source: NCA, *Parliamentary Zone Review: outcomes report*, 2000, p.80)



Figure 2. The areas in red extending from Parkes, Barton and Russell to Acton show the location of Paid Parking Areas on National Land in Inner Canberra, comprising approximately 9,000 car spaces, as announced in the 2013–2014 Budget. (Source: NCA *Parking Management on National Land* Fact Sheet, 2013)

- 2.5 In this submission, the Society will use the term ‘Paid Parking Areas on National Land’ instead of ‘Parliamentary Triangle’ to describe the overall subject site of the inquiry (Figure 2)
- 2.6 In the Society’s view, retail outlets in the Parliamentary Zone should only be permitted within existing buildings, such as Treasury and the John Gorton Building, with strict controls on advertising, signage and illumination. Retail outlets should not be located in separate structures due to the national profile, historic significance and visual sensitivity of the Parliamentary Precinct and its setting.
- 2.7 Outside the Parliamentary Zone but within the overall location of ‘Paid Parking Areas on National Land’ – particularly the high employment areas of Barton and Russell – the Society strongly recommends the incorporation of retail outlets (if needed) in existing buildings. Stand-alone pavilions if carefully sited could be acceptable, if located in areas of concentrated activity and commercial viability. Once again, these outlets should be subject to strict controls on advertising, signage and illumination.
- 2.8 The Society notes the second issue raised in the Terms of Reference of the inquiry:

The adequacy of the retail services available in the precinct against the benchmark of like employment precincts located in the Capital.

The operative term is ‘like employment precincts’. Stated simply, there are no employment precincts in Canberra similar to those associated with the ‘Paid Parking Areas on National Land’ locations in Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton.

- 2.9 The principal employment nodes in Canberra were mapped in a study of Employment Locations released by the ACT Planning & Land Authority in 2009. (Figure 3)
- 2.10 Outside Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton, the employment nodes can be categorised as follows:
- Town Centres – Civic, Woden, Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Gungahlin;
 - Industrial Areas – Fyshwick, Mitchell, Hume;
 - Enterprise Zone – Airport
- 2.11 Each of these nodes is supported by a mix of uses, including retail, which is the outcome of purposeful planning over decades. It is invalid to compare the provision of retail services in these employment nodes with Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton, which have been centres of public administration and national institutions since the founding of Canberra.
- 2.12 The Committee should reject claims by Government departments located in Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton that they are ‘hard done by’ because they don’t have retail

facilities comparable to Town Centres such as Civic, Woden or Belconnen; and therefore deserve free surface car parking on National Land for their employees.

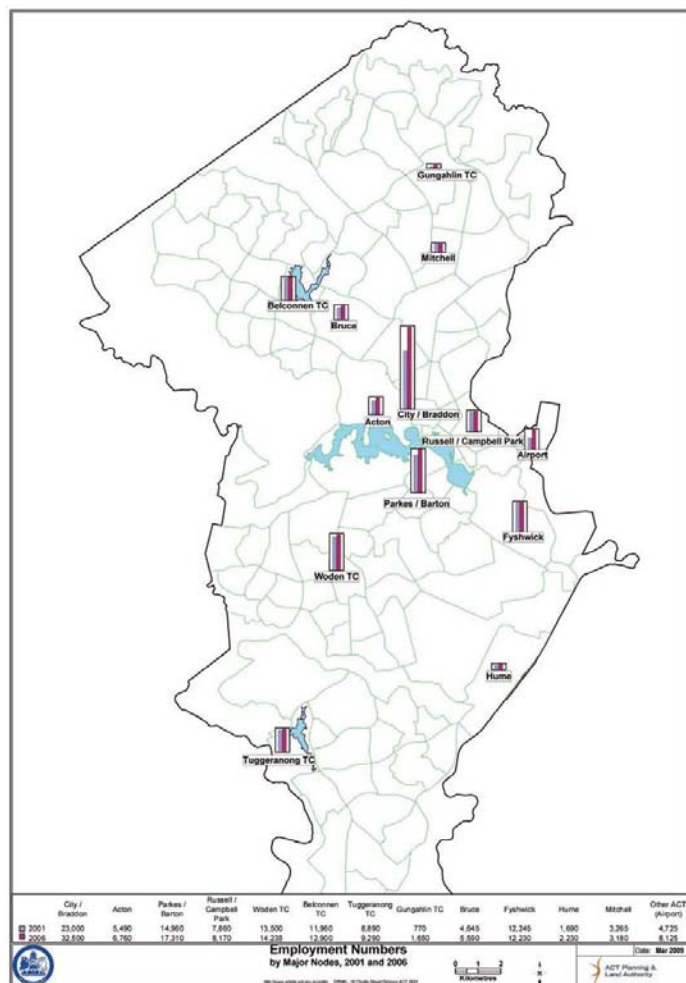


Figure 3. Employment at major nodes in Metropolitan Canberra, 2001-2006. (Source: ACTPLA, *Employment Location in Canberra*, April 2009, p.10)

- 2.13 It must be recognised that the opportunity cost to Australian taxpayers of using fully-serviced urban land in the centre of the National Capital for free surface car parks for 60 years or more has been enormous.
- 2.14 The solution to the locational challenge of the single-use employment zones in Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton is not continuation of the unsustainable practice of free surface car parking, but the provision of adequate public transport to these areas.

3.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

- 3.1 The Society welcomes the current inquiry, which carries forward detailed review of the 'free surface car parking' issue in Inner Canberra previously investigated by the Committee in 2003 and 2004:

JSCNET, *Not a Town Centre: the proposal for pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone*, The Committee, Canberra, October 2003.

JSCNET, *A National Capital, A Place to Live: inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority*, Canberra, July 2004, p.104

- 3.2 To assist the Committee in its deliberations, the Walter Burley Griffin Society makes the following eight (8) recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The subject site of the Inquiry should be described as 'Paid Parking Areas on National Land' in Parkes, Barton, Russell and Acton as mapped in the *Parking Management on National Land* Fact Sheet issued in 2013 by the National Capital Authority, rather than the imprecise term 'Parliamentary Triangle', which does not include Barton and Acton.

Recommendation 2: The Parliamentary Zone, defined in the *Parliament Act 1974* (as amended), should be recognised as a special area within the subject site protected by statute, not to be confused with the imprecise term 'Parliamentary Triangle'.

Recommendation 3: Parking fees and fines generated by the Paid Parking Policy should be directed to support public transport in Inner Canberra serving the areas previously provided with free surface car parking.

Recommendation 4: A shuttle bus service should be established on a sound, permanent basis with increased frequency in periods of peak demand to provide access to the established amenities of Inner Canberra (Civic, Kingston, Manuka), which offer a range of retail services together with the advantages of competitive pricing that no stand-alone facility in the Parliamentary Zone and surrounding office employment areas could match.

Recommendation 5: Given the extensive and increasing use of on-line services in retailing worldwide, the need for physical use of retail facilities in 21st century Canberra should not be a major determinant of urban policy and spatial planning.

Recommendation 6: If the inquiry finds there is a need and a commercial rationale for 'convenience store' facilities to augment the shuttle bus service recommended above, the Society urges the adoption of different siting and design guidelines in the Parliamentary Zone than in the areas beyond the Parliamentary Zone in Barton, Russell and Acton.

Recommendation 7: Retail outlets in the Parliamentary Zone should only be permitted within existing buildings, such as Treasury and the John Gorton Building, with strict controls on advertising, signage and illumination. Retail outlets should not be located in separate structures due to the national profile, historic significance and visual sensitivity of the Parliamentary Precinct and its setting.

Recommendation 8: Outside the Parliamentary Zone but within the overall location of 'Paid Parking Areas on National Land' – particularly the high employment areas of Barton and Russell – the Society strongly recommends the incorporation of retail outlets (if needed) in existing buildings. Stand-alone pavilions if carefully sited could be acceptable, if located in areas of concentrated activity and commercial viability, subject to strict controls on advertising, signage and illumination.

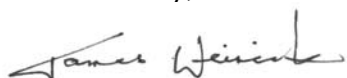
This Submission was prepared on behalf of the Sydney-based Management Committee of the Walter Burley Griffin Society, in consultation with members of the Canberra Chapter Committee of the Society.

Established in 1988 in Sydney, the Society – now in its twenty-fifth 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 is especially concerned with the conservation of landscape designs, urban plans, buildings and other works designed by or having an association with the Griffins.

In relation to urban development in contemporary Canberra, the Society seeks to promote an understanding of the principles that underpin the Griffin Plan for the National Capital, the continuing value of these principles to the nation, and the need to conserve the places, institutions and processes founded on these principles.

If it would assist the Committee, the Society would be pleased to appear at a public hearing on Paid Parking and the provision of amenity in the Parliamentary Zone and surrounding office employment locations of Barton, Russell and Acton.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Weirick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Professor James Weirick
President, Walter Burley Griffin Society