



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL CAPITAL AND
EXTERNAL TERRITORIES –
INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY

Background

The Australian National University is a Commonwealth Authority established under the ANU Act 1946. The University's principal site is at Acton, ACT, in the Central National Area. The site is designated land and therefore University capital works are subject to the approval of the National Capital Authority. Most of the University's land at Acton is covered by three perpetual leases (1953, 1967 and 1974) with small 99 year leases (1999 and 2000) recently acquired. Leases are administered at present by the ACT on behalf of the Commonwealth.

General Comment

The University has an active capital works program and we are satisfied with the existing consultative and approvals processes. Decisions about capital works are made in the context of development principles agreed several years ago with the Authority. Procedures are simple. Staff of the Authority have been helpful and constructive over the years and have a good understanding of our needs.

Role of the Authority

We are aware of the history of planning in the ACT leading to the establishment of the National Capital Authority under the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act of 1988. We are conscious of potential problems in terms of overlapping responsibilities between the Authority and the Territory (through Planning and Land Management). In the past, we have experienced some coordination difficulties with the two authorities in respect of issues at our boundaries but these have not been insurmountable, given the goodwill of the parties.

We believe it is important that planning and development of Canberra, as the Nation's Capital (and the Territory overall), is driven by National considerations and therefore by the Commonwealth Government, although we recognise that there are a large number of activities which are of a State or local government function. If there is a change, one option which may be considered is a return to the arrangements pre-1988 with a single authority for planning and development of Canberra. A dual reporting arrangement would be difficult to manage. A further option might be two authorities, but with the National Capital Authority having a broader policy role but no administrative role, with all buildings and works approvals being handled by the ACT in terms of these policies. We would be concerned with any change to the current arrangements which work well from our point of view and are certainly less tortuous and time consuming than

those of the ACT. Whatever the over-arching structure, we want to argue strongly for a continuation of the current working arrangements.

Awareness of Canberra as the National Capital

The Authority is known principally for its planning and development role, but there is an important role to be nurtured and probably expanded in terms of function 6 (e) in the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988, ie "to foster an awareness of Canberra as the National Capital". This is an important issue for the University as the National University in the National Capital. It is vital for us to be able to attract and retain staff and students and therefore the attractions and potential of Canberra should be widely marketed particularly in Australian but also in other areas. We suffer to a certain extent because of negative images of Canberra. There is still a significant remnant of resentment about "Canberra" and the National Capital Authority, along with the ACT Government, has a major role in overcoming all of the misconceptions. In fact, 6 (e) should be amended to "promote Canberra as the National Capital".

Conclusion

The University is happy with its working arrangements with the National Capital Authority and wishes the Authority to be retained with its current functions. Furthermore, at the practical level, more effort and resources should be put into the Authority in terms of its fifth function – to foster an awareness of Canberra as the National Capital. In fact, this terminology should be strengthened, to enable the National Capital Authority to promote Canberra.

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