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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL
AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES

Reference: Pay parking in the parliamentary zone

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES

Friday, 9 May 2003

Members: Senator Lightfoot (*Chairman*), Senator Crossin (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Hogg, Lundy, Scullion and Stott Despoja and Mr Causley, Ms Ellis, Mr Johnson, Mr Neville, Mr Snowdon and Mr Cameron Thompson

Senators and members in attendance: Senators Hogg, Lightfoot and Stott Despoja and Ms Ellis and Mr Neville

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- The interests of visitors to the Parliamentary Zone;
- The interests of those employed in the Parliamentary Zone and adjacent areas;
- The interests of the national institutions in the Parliamentary Zone;
- Tourism and related issues; and
- Proposed parking policies for Forrest and Barton – areas adjacent to the Parliamentary Zone managed by the ACT Government – and the effects of these policies on parking arrangements in the Parliamentary Zone.

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Committee met at 9.38 a.m.

CHAIRMAN—Good morning. I hereby open this public hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories inquiry into the proposal to introduce pay parking into the parliamentary zone. This is the second time the issue of parking in the parliamentary zone has been examined by the committee. In 1994, the committee conducted an inquiry into a proposal from the then National Capital Planning Authority to have a paid voucher parking system installed in the parliamentary zone. The then committee recommended that parliamentary approval not be granted for the proposed works and that alternative means of funding be investigated. In June 2002, the National Capital Authority presented a submission to the committee proposing a policy for the management of parking in the parliamentary zone that included the introduction of pay parking. After reviewing the proposal, the committee sought a reference from the minister to inquire into pay parking in the parliamentary zone. On 10 December 2002, the minister referred the issue to the committee for inquiry.

Although the committee was against the introduction of pay parking in the parliamentary zone in 1994, we, the current committee members, commence this new inquiry with open minds. There are clearly significant problems relating to parking within the zone. These include traffic flow problems, limited car parking spaces, physical isolation from major buildings and attractions, and a poor pedestrian network. This was evident to the committee during an inspection of existing parking facilities within the zone and adjacent areas at Barton on 16 September 2002. The committee agrees that these problems have to be addressed, but the committee is conscious of the many interests involved in this issue, such as those of individuals who work in the parliamentary zone, the various government departments and national institutions situated throughout the area, visitors to our national institutions, and the National Capital Authority with its responsibility for the management of the parliamentary zone. The committee therefore wants to ensure that any policy to manage parking in the zone is not only cost-effective but equitable.

At the conclusion of the inquiry, the committee will table its findings, conclusions and recommendations in the parliament in a report, which will be publicly available. The committee normally authorises submissions for publication, and they will be placed on the committee's web site. Some copies are also available here today. To date the committee has received 38 submissions from interested parties. The committee would like to hear from those people who work in the parliamentary zone. For instance, what mode of transport did you use to get to work this morning? If you did not use public transport, why not? Do parliamentary sessions affect your parking? I now call our first witnesses, from the Community and Public Sector Union.

[9.41 a.m.]

McDEVITT, Mr Vincent, Lead Organiser, Community and Public Sector Union

REYNOLDS, Mr Matthew, National President, Community and Public Sector Union

CHAIRMAN—On behalf of the committee, I welcome Mr McDevitt and Mr Reynolds. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received a submission, No. 16, from the Community and Public Sector Union. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Reynolds—Since we put in our submission we have had over 500 replies to our survey. They do not change the percentages in any way so we do not wish to update our submission.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public, but if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee you may request that hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask you some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Reynolds—We appreciate the opportunity to represent the views of our members and potential members. We represent staff in all government agencies that work in the parliamentary zone and adjacent areas. I have obviously received a significant number of representations. Based on our consultations with members and potential members, we are opposed to any immediate introduction of commercial parking in the parliamentary zone and adjacent areas. Our view is that the National Capital Authority's submission raises further questions in regard to the National Capital Plan and how any revenue will be spent from the development of land or the implementation of pay parking.

The only public policy reason to introduce pay parking is to provide an incentive for employees and other people to use public transport. Whilst we support that aim, the level of public transport required to significantly increase patronage does not currently exist, and nor is there anything in the ACT budget handed down last Tuesday that would lead us to have any confidence that it will be introduced in the near or foreseeable future. I would indicate that our submission was provided prior to any knowledge of the detail of the ACT budget, and obviously the ACT's submission to this committee is at this stage confidential until the committee releases it.

The CPSU supports the National Greenhouse Strategy, but that strategy has a clear link between the examination of commuter parking fees and actions to improve public transport. Information from employees in this area leads us to believe that the advent of commercial parking without adequate services and without adequate public transport will not result in a decrease of car usage but will simply provide a cost impost on staff and government agencies in the area. The replies to our survey show that if commercial pay parking were introduced the vast majority of employees would continue to bring their cars and that any use of public transport

would increase travel time quite significantly, in some cases up to 10 hours a week, eating into work time or the time of our members' family lives. Safety is a significant concern in this area, particularly during the winter months.

The responses to our survey highlight the lack of services. The types of services which our members are indicating that they are unable to access in this area are services such as attendance at lectures and courses, work related meetings—where they actually quite often use their own cars—personal business such as banking and shopping, and child care and other family needs. Employees in the public sector, we must say, have been recognising the value of balancing work and family life through enterprise agreements, but the impact of pay parking on the lives of our members will be high with that travel time, lack of access to child care and other facilities, and safety. For some part-time workers, any impost on their income may result in them actually examining whether they remain in employment. Therefore, we have recommended that the impact on women and part-time workers be assessed through this process.

We have also received comments from our members, as can also be seen in the Australian Public Service Commission submission, that the issue of free parking is an incentive to work in many government agencies around this area, despite the lack of services, and so there will certainly be an impact on employment in the area if pay parking is brought in. Additionally, the FBT cost to government agencies for any parking at this stage is unknown. In 1994, the committee noted that the FBT cost for Parliament House alone would be \$600,000 in 1994 terms. The FBT would be payable if there were a commercial park within one kilometre of prospective employers.

The CPSU is also concerned that the development of buildings in the zone and the adjacent areas is currently adding to the problems of throughput and traffic flow without adequate support services. With buildings such as the one at 38 Sydney Avenue—the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts—and the new one going up next to that building, on the corner of State Circle and Sydney Avenue, there has not been sufficient planning foresight to put in adequate car parking. So the implementation of the National Capital Plan is at this stage not taken into account, and there are obviously very serious issues.

We are also not aware of any cost-benefit analysis having been done or of where any funds raised by land development or commercial parking would be used. In 1994, as you have rightly pointed out, Chairman, the committee recommended that the National Capital Authority investigate alternative streams of revenue, and the CPSU is not aware that this has been done. We support the National Archives of Australia submission, which observes:

There is little support for the notion that pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone is good public policy.

The recommendations in our submission are aimed at progressing planning issues for the parliamentary zone and adjacent areas, and when this is complete a further look at commercial parking in the parliamentary zone would be appropriate. In the interim, our recommendation is to reject the proposal.

In response to the specific questions which you raised in your introduction, Chairman, I drove to work by myself in a car this morning to my office in Barton, and then walked to Parliament House. The reason I did not use public transport is that it would double the period of time that it

would take me to get from Giralang to Barton and I need to attend a number of meetings later in the day, at the Canberra Hospital and in Civic, where public transport would not be suitable and using cabs would be expensive for our organisation.

Mr McDevitt—I also drove to work this morning from Richardson as a single occupant of the vehicle. I parked at the office and walked up here. Similarly, catching buses is not viable for me. The time that it would take makes it unrealistic.

CHAIRMAN—How do you think the introduction of pay parking, if it in fact eventuates, would affect those people who are not employed in the parliamentary zone or adjacent to it and are not likely then to be subsidised in any way or have their parking paid for by their employers, although I am not suggesting that all employers would subsidise or pay their employees' parking fees? I am referring to volunteers who work at some of our institutions, volunteers who work at Parliament House, students who necessarily use the magnificent facilities of the National Library on a regular basis, and visitors—and this concerns me as I know it concerns other members of the committee as well—who have every reason to feel unencumbered when they visit the national capital?

Mr Reynolds—Clearly, our consultations with members have been largely around their specific issues. But, as our members work at these national icons, they have also raised the issue of volunteers, students and visitors. According to our survey, car usage would not decrease if commercial car parking were introduced. The car parking spaces that we currently have would continue to be used. Volunteers, students and visitors would have no more access to parking than they do today, except that they would be paying for it. An inquiry into the cultural institutions is being held and we are not aware of the content of that review, but, at the end of the day, it will cost these people money to attend if commercial parking is introduced.

We also know, through the National Capital Authority submission and information from our members, that visit time is increasing when people do visit the national icons. There has been the advent of the National Portrait Gallery and other exhibitions at the National Library and the National Gallery, so the length of time that visitors stay is increasing. Quite often they may or may not be subject to parking fines at the end of the day. Volunteers and students—and most of the national icons have volunteer guides or friends of the relevant institution and they very kindly give up their time to assist visitors—unfortunately would be subject to a cost if they were to visit. Students would be very wary about the use of the wonderful facilities at the National Library if it was going to cost them any significant amount of money. So, if they are full-time students, they will take into account any cost to them. We do not have specific empirical information on that, but certainly those issues have been raised with us by our members.

Senator HOGG—In your survey, you talk about parliamentary employees. Can you tell me where those parliamentary employees are? Are they here, physically, on the hill or are they people who might be attached to here but work further down into the triangle?

Mr Reynolds—We surveyed people in the parliamentary zone, so we did survey people in this building and those who work in government agencies in the parliamentary zone and just adjacent to the parliamentary zone. These are areas such as in Sydney Avenue, which is just outside the zone, and the Edmund Barton Building, which, again, is just outside the zone. So that is the group of people we surveyed.

Senator HOGG—I have just had some clarification. There was a bit of confusion as to whether the hill itself was in there or not in there. But I do understand that, for some departments in the parliament, people physically work here but are sited down in other buildings.

Mr Reynolds—Absolutely. The car park which has now been cut off from public use, other than for employees of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, would have been a place where people who work in Parliament House would have parked and then walked up the street. Our survey included those people. There would certainly be people who work in the house who park outside of the house car parks.

Senator HOGG—Which car park has been cut off?

Mr Reynolds—The car park on the corner of State Circle and Brisbane Avenue, which now has a boom gate across it so only Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade employees are able to park in that car park.

Senator HOGG—Are they able to park there free of charge?

Mr Reynolds—They are able to park there free of charge.

Ms ELLIS—Would they need ID to get through the boom gate?

Mr Reynolds—Yes, they do. Also, when the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts found out that the National Capital Authority had approved a boom gate for the DFAT car park, they also sought specific car parking and now have 82 places on a paddock at the back of 38 Sydney Avenue.

Senator HOGG—When did these boom gates go in?

Mr Reynolds—I am not sure.

Senator HOGG—Can you take that on notice? We could find it out some other way—

Mr McDevitt—I am in a position to give you an approximate answer.

Senator HOGG—Yes, just an approximate answer.

Mr McDevitt—The DFAT boom gate has been in for about 10 weeks and the Sydney Avenue one for about seven or eight weeks.

Senator HOGG—So that has further exacerbated parking in that area?

Mr McDevitt—That is right.

Senator HOGG—It does bring up the one issue I wanted to raise, that there is clearly a problem with parking in that area. We did a trip around the area; how some of the cars parked and where they were parked is absolutely beyond anyone's imagination. Having said that, there

is quite obviously a problem that needs to be fixed. Do you have a remedy for the problem, and where would the cost of that remedy come from?

Mr Reynolds—The remedy needs to be a holistic remedy so that there are facilities available in this area. Simply putting in commercial car parking will not alter the vast majority of people's travel—not until there are services in the area and adequate public transport which does not significantly increase travel time. I note that the ACT budget provides some moneys to have a look at how to reduce travelling time on the public transport system, but it will be a significant period of time until that has any impact. Until the public transport infrastructure is increased, then pay parking will not assist in this area.

Our view is that the matter needs to be looked at as a holistic issue as part of the National Capital Plan and include the development of land and the provision of adequate car parking. Whether that is pay parking or not pay parking, it needs to be introduced at the same time as developments, rather than there being continual building of buildings of significant size that will hold significant numbers of people without consideration of the car parking issue and without the revenue from that land being used to assist with parking in this area.

Mr NEVILLE—Following on from the questions of my colleague Senator Hogg, I will say that there is a problem with parking in that area, perhaps exacerbated by the boom gates you refer to. But forgetting about the pay parking aspect for the time being, what would your solution be? How could we improve the parking situation there? Like you, I am yet to be convinced that putting on a charge solves it. I have some sympathy for the point of view that you have just espoused, but the other side of the argument is that, as Senator Hogg said, when we went there we found that some of the car parking areas were pretty ordinary. Some were obviously paddocks that had just been turned over to interim parking with a bit of cracker dust on them. In others it had got out of hand; there were cars up on the footpath and on the verges. So what is the solution to parking? There may be more public buildings there in the future. There needs to be a solution that takes into account not just the issue of payment but also the issue of capacity. What is your view of that?

Mr Reynolds—We agree with you. The National Capital Authority submission provides a chart showing what the zone will look like in 2050 and that certainly does show significantly more public buildings in it. When buildings are approved for development then the issue of parking needs to be included in the approval process for those buildings. It would appear that has not been the case up to date with the buildings that have been built more recently. The issue of parking needs to be factored more integrally into the National Capital Plan and, as it is introduced, that will also give time for increased public transport. If there are new buildings here, obviously there would be a need for increased public transport to make it more attractive. There needs to be an approach with the new authority and the ACT government and the National Capital Authority about including parking in the plan in a more holistic manner.

Mr NEVILLE—What would your view be about an aesthetically pleasing—not that many of them are, I know, having looked around Australia—car parking arrangement? Would you see a multistorey car park with perhaps a couple of storeys underground and a couple of storeys above ground?

Mr Reynolds—If you are looking at a multistorey car park around this area, a commercial car park—

Mr NEVILLE—Not necessarily—

Mr Reynolds—It should be around an area where there is public transport. At this stage this area is not a public transport hub, as other major centres are, and so that will certainly need to be factored into it. We would have a different position if there were significant public transport available in this area. We would need to take that into account, and I think the architects should get a prize if they do create an aesthetically pleasing multistorey car park.

CHAIRMAN—That is an oxymoron of course.

Mr NEVILLE—It has been done.

Mr Reynolds—There is certainly a capacity for some other car park to be underground, which would make some sense. But simply increasing the number of people coming into this area without adequately dealing with issues such as you have raised, in our view will only exacerbate the problems on an ongoing basis.

Mr NEVILLE—In areas where your members do pay for parking, can you give us a bit of a benchmark of what they are paying per week?

Mr Reynolds—We have members particularly at Tuggeranong, Woden, Civic and Belconnen. We do not have very many government agencies at this stage in Gungahlin. Members in Civic are paying over \$8 a day if they are paying for all-day car parking. The ACT budget—

Mr NEVILLE—Can they buy a weekly ticket?

Mr Reynolds—They can buy a weekly ticket and a monthly ticket and, in fact, can buy a yearly ticket if they so choose. If you are paying for surface parking around that area, just outside those areas you are probably looking at paying about \$80 to \$100 per month. Obviously that is a significant impost. But it does vary quite significantly and, if the committee wanted us to, we could give you an example of those—

Mr NEVILLE—Could we have that on notice, please?

Mr Reynolds—Yes. The ACT government budget handed down on Tuesday has also indicated that there will be a levy on commercial car parking and, according to media reports, that cost will be transferred to users. So car parking costs are likely to increase.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I would like you to elaborate on your comments about public transport in the ACT. Consistently, submissions talk about the inadequacy of public transport. Does the CPSU have any nominal costs or ideas about how much money would need to be injected into Canberra to ensure that it could become a public transport hub in much the same way as other cities? What do you think is required financially and otherwise to improve public transport, and should we be making that a priority as opposed to paying for parking?

Mr Reynolds—Certainly the extra hours that our members have indicated they would need for travel to Barton and Parkes, which is where the majority of our members work, would be 6.3 hours and 5.9 hours respectively. That is in addition to the travel time they are taking currently. Obviously, taking six hours out of your family life in a week is quite significant. If that were brought down to a more reasonable level, it may attract more people to use public transport. We do not have figures and we are unaware of what the cost of a very significant injection into public transport for this area would be. We would be happy to work with the ACT government in trying to develop that and to have some input into the public transport plan for this area, given that it is of great interest to our members. We would certainly support the focus of any resolution to the parking and traffic issues in this area. In my view it would be a much better focus in the long term than simply having land development and commercial car parking.

Mr McDevitt—I would like to add to that. Our survey did show around the six-hour average. Clearly there were a lot of people above that. I see in submission No. 15 a lady who lives in Tuggeranong talked about a trip of an hour and 20 minutes. As I recall from her submission, she had a desire to catch the bus, had seriously examined the different options available to her and had found that, at the end of the day, she could not tolerate that. Furthermore, we have anecdotal evidence in our survey that goes along the lines of submission No. 13, in which Katherine Graham states that she lives fairly locally and that it takes her five minutes to drive to work, but taking a bus would take 45 minutes. I conclude from that there would need to be a really holistic, significant injection of revenue into the existing bus network Canberra wide to get people to view this area as a viable alternative. I suppose the question of bus fares in relation to the cost of a car park would be one of their considerations.

Also, I have noted recently media articles on a serious discussion occurring about a proposed light rail system for Canberra. If I recall correctly, the local planning minister, Simon Corbell, is talking about different options. This article from the *Canberra Times* on 28 February, so it is quite current, shows a bit of a blueprint layout. We can see that the ACT government is clearly grappling with a citywide problem.

CHAIRMAN—Can you make that available? Did you say that is a report, or is it just the article?

Mr McDevitt—It is an article.

CHAIRMAN—Assuming we have not got the article, would you make that available?

Mr McDevitt—Yes.

CHAIRMAN—Would you identify the article a bit more specifically?

Mr McDevitt—It is a *Canberra Times* article from 28 February, headed ‘Inner city light rail could be start of network’.

CHAIRMAN—We could probably get that from our own sources, thank you, Mr McDevitt.

Mr McDevitt—In relation to the question, I note from the ACT government budget that they are talking about putting a quarter of a million dollars towards looking at this issue; \$50,000 of

that is already earmarked to go somewhere else, which leaves a couple of hundred thousand dollars. They speak about the main focus being on Flemington Road. I am not even sure where that road is, but it does not seem that it will address this issue. So getting people in from Tuggeranong, Gungahlin, Richardson or even five minutes down the road is really a concern. I think it would take an enormous injection of funds to make it viable.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I would like to clarify something. In relation to the \$50,000 that is earmarked for something else, has the government asked someone to look into this issue or has already contracted some work in this area?

Mr Reynolds—We know that members of the Department of Urban Services, which is an ACT government agency, and Action Buses are looking as much at positive initiatives for increased patronage on public transport. In terms of the specific ACT budget on Tuesday, at this moment we do not have the information you ask for. Not surprisingly, Flemington Road is the one that goes around the racecourse, but I do not know whether that has been contracted.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—We can put that on notice to the government. In relation to the fringe benefits tax liability aspect of your submission, you have advised, or urged, the committee to get ATO advice. What is your understanding of the likelihood of there being a liability? Have you been in contact with the ATO in regard to that issue?

Mr Reynolds—The FBT tax laws provide that, if there is a commercial car park that charges above a certain daily rate—at this stage it is \$5.96 a day—any car parking provided by an employer within one kilometre will be subject to fringe benefits tax. The National Capital Authority submission indicates it is unlikely that the daily charge will be lower than \$5.96. At an ACT budget briefing on Tuesday, the under treasurer was asked about on-street pay parking in Barton and whether the cost would be the same in Barton as it would be in Civic. His answer was yes. That leads us to the view that any commercial car parking would be in the same ballpark. Given that the ACT government will also be putting a levy on commercial parking, we do not consider that any commercial daily cost of car parking in Barton will be less than \$5.96. Therefore FBT would be payable.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—We will chase that up with the ATO.

Ms ELLIS—I would put on the record at the beginning of my questions that I am a local and I drove to work. I live in the Tuggeranong Valley, and I do not find buses useful for me either. I just thought it would be fair to mention that I am a worker in the area. In mentioning the survey, you said you had approximately 500 responses. Roughly how many members did those 500 responses come from?

Mr Reynolds—It would be around 5,000.

Ms ELLIS—That is a reasonable return.

Mr McDevitt—We had a very short, tight time frame as well.

Ms ELLIS—That is fine. I know there has been a lot of chat around. There has been a lot of discussion this morning about your submission concerning the obvious alternative, which is

public transport. Given that the other major work centres in the town are the Tuggeranong town centre, the Woden town centre, Civic and the Belconnen town centre, with perhaps an additional large one at Russell—but I want to exclude Russell just for a second; I think Russell run little minibuses during the day—

Mr Reynolds—There are some shuttle buses that operate around some areas. Some Commonwealth government agencies run those. Defence is the biggest one.

Ms ELLIS—Exactly. For that reason, Russell is a little on the side for the purpose of the question. The main problem that I see—and I want your opinion on this—is that the major work centres I referred to all have very high-level facilities and service provision within them, be they banking, retail, medical, social or whatever. For the committee's benefit, can you draw the comparison between one of those places being your workplace as against the Barton parliamentary zone area being your workplace, given that we are talking about access through the day as well as getting to work?

Mr Reynolds—One of the questions we asked respondents was what they needed to use their car for during the day. The responses were banking, shopping, child care, family responsibilities and other personal business—obviously health and so on. A significant number of people use their car for those purposes. Of the respondents from Barton, 70 per cent use their cars during the day to access those facilities. In Parkes, 72 per cent use their cars for those facilities. If you worked in Tuggeranong, Woden, Belconnen or Civic you could, essentially, walk to those services and access them during your lunchbreak and other breaks during the day. However, if you were in Barton and needed to attend a doctor, pop into a child-care centre or do some family shopping, you would need to catch a bus into one of those other areas which, obviously, is not accessible during the day.

Also, people who work in this area work long hours. The 'standard' day of nine to five is not standard in the Australian Public Service, I would suggest, and certainly is not standard in this area. Leading up to the budget, staff at agencies such as Treasury and Department of Finance and Administration work very long hours. If they need to pick up their children when their child-care centre closes at six o'clock then the public transport system, at this stage, would not be sufficient for that to occur. It is those types of services—which are easily accessible to people in the larger centres—which people in this area have to go to one of those other centres to use.

Ms ELLIS—The question, and the answer, is based on the premise that the National Capital Authority's attempt to bring pay parking into this area is a deterrent from car parking to public transport for all of the right esoteric reasons. In fact, there may be other reasons as well, and we will need to ask the NCA about that. Mr Chairman, can I ask that when the ACT government appear before us, on another day, they bring with them a thorough mapping and timetabling of the bus services through the whole of the region we are talking about so that we can look at that on that day?

CHAIRMAN—We could request that.

Ms ELLIS—It would be good if we gave them notice of that before they come. I have one other question. The inevitability that we are facing as a committee, of course, is that, while we can inquire into the parliamentary zone itself, Barton falls under the ambit of the ACT

government. They can impose, separate from this committee, whatever they wish in terms of pay parking, as they have indicated around the country.

Mr Reynolds—Are you referring to on-street pay parking?

Ms ELLIS—Yes. How does the union view what could happen if there is an exclusion of this sort of pay parking within the area that we are speaking about this morning but it does come in in Barton? The committee has already discussed this. There is a convergence of borders, in governance terms. What is your opinion of what could happen and what could be done?

Mr Reynolds—The union is fully aware that we need to make representations to this committee and to the ACT government about the issue, and we will do so. One of our concerns in regard to the initiatives of the ACT government is that they have indicated they will bring in pay parking in the Barton area ‘consistent with the National Capital Authority’s plan for off-street paid parking’. I would have thought that was a matter this committee would be very interested in—that is, the ACT government bringing in pay parking consistent with the intentions of the NCA. We will see where it goes. The on-street parking in this area is currently regulated. Although it is not pay parking, it is regulated and it only becomes pay parking if you stay there too long. That will not change.

Ms ELLIS—Do you mean there is a fine?

Mr Reynolds—There is a fine, yes. If the Department of Urban Services or PALM are planning to approve any off-street commercial parking adjacent to the zone, we would be interested but we are not aware of any at this stage. We will also be watching that with interest and lobbying the ACT government.

Mr McDevitt—I would like to revisit one of your earlier questions. I want to make the point that whilst public transport is probably the single biggest problem the lack of services is almost as big a problem. It takes a fundamental shift to get a worker out of their car and onto the bus. At the moment, if a member in this area has to duck out and pick up a script for their kid at lunch, because they are so isolated they have to get out in their lunch hour, get down to the pharmacy and get back. When they go down there, they pay for parking. They could pay here, lose their spot, go down there, get hit again, come back and have to try to find somewhere else to park.

In relation to the land holdings and what have you, the parking in Barton and Forrest seems to me, certainly over the near decade since the last inquiry, to have greatly worsened. It does not seem that there was any effective planning. I am sure the buildings are not just being constructed willy-nilly but certainly down Sydney Avenue, for instance, near the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, it seems to me that on that stretch there were plenty of parks. But now we have seen two huge buildings going up which are soon to be occupied by, no doubt, thousands of people who will come with a car. But there has been no increased provision for parking, and we have seen lots of buildings going up elsewhere.

Looking at solutions, I would have thought that—had I been running the show—when you build a building you make provision for parking. The surface parks down there at the moment are certainly ugly and unsightly, because they have been left that way by the owner of those blocks of land—which, I understand, to a large extent is the NCA. At Sydney Avenue, being

responsible for members in that building, I was on the receiving end of a number of complaints, which I passed on to management, about the provision of parking. It took months and months of negotiations just to get permission from the NCA to get half a dozen truckloads of blue metal dumped on the ground so people could park on it. With the available land that has been there since 1994, they could have easily made provision for parking, but maybe it is a case of overdevelopment with no planning for parking. It has come to a head now where everyone acknowledges it is a mess that needs to be fixed, but who should carry the can for that mess? Certainly our members do not think it should be them.

Ms ELLIS—I want to thank you for the comments you have made, particularly in relation to the lack of services, because that is what my question was actually looking at. It is okay for workers in other town centres and, whatever imposition occurs or not at a local government level regarding parking, the point is that services are within those areas and people are in a slightly better position to make a choice. But in this area the lack of services is incredibly obvious, and your comments are very pertinent to that. I think it is fair for the committee to acknowledge, from the comments that Mr McDevitt has just made, that over the last 10 years it has been very obvious that, as new development occurs, there have been frequent local comments asking, ‘This is terrific, but where are the cars that are now on that block going to go when it is built on?’ It has been a shrinking scenario. You are right—and we will ask the questions of the NCA when we have them here—but there has not appeared to be a stringent plan for putting in place the long-term provision of services and/or parking, and that is basically what you are saying. Thank you for those comments.

Senator HOGG—I have one further question about that area. My view in respect of that area is that it is absolutely paramount that Australian citizens have freedom of access to the area. To me, it is an iconic area and any sense of any pay parking for visitors to that area is to me just absolutely off this planet. Having said that, what would be the response of the union to a situation, if it were to evolve, where there were two classes of parking there, including a class of parking which was clearly available for visitors to the area? There is only one difficulty with this, and that is in identifying Canberra citizens, who equally have a right of freedom of access to the area when visiting those sites.

Putting that minor difficulty to one side for a moment, it is about identifying a regime for tourists, as such, and then identifying a different regime in respect of the people who work in the area. I am not advocating pay parking—do not take it that way at all—but it would clearly create two different classes of people eligible to park in the area, and it might well be that there would be more restrictive conditions placed upon those who are employed in the area, and that might in turn require certain works to be done to accommodate those needs. What is your response to that?

Mr Reynolds—Our contention is that the issues of public transport and services to the area are the paramount reasons why commercial pay parking should not be introduced in this area at this time. In terms of what you have raised, the identification would be a major problem, particularly given that the people who work in this area are patrons of the icons themselves and may well attend those icons. It would create a very significant problem. If the public transport and the services questions were resolved, in the longer term, then that is a very legitimate question. I cannot think of any answer to the identification issue.

Senator HOGG—Could I just put it to you that you would pick out a Queensland numberplate or a Victorian numberplate fairly easily. The trouble would be in identifying where a local person was claiming to visit the High Court or the National Gallery or something such as that. I think that that is not insurmountable. I am putting to you that I want to protect both classes, but my primary desire is to protect that class of people who have an inalienable right to be there—and that is the Australian citizenry.

Mr Reynolds—Yes, certainly the people's place needs to be accessible. In terms of New South Wales numberplates, there would be a number of people who work in this area who live in Queanbeyan.

Senator HOGG—That is correct.

Mr Reynolds—So there would be an issue there, outside of visitors borrowing vehicles—I lend my car to visitors quite often—with an ACT numberplate.

Senator HOGG—Yes.

Mr Reynolds—I think that that should be a question for after the two issues of public transport and the services have been resolved. Whether it is possible or not—whether that can be regulated in some way—we would need to take some advice from people who are more knowledgeable about the planning process than we are.

Mr McDevitt—The plans that I have seen are not for a significant increase in density of employment—like high-rises in the parliamentary zone itself. Most of the development we have seen over the last 10 years has been in the adjacent areas. That would probably be the target area—or the greatest possible reality—to make provision for service car parks or indeed two levels under and two above or what have you. I do not think you are necessarily going to see an increase in pressure. Certainly in my experience, having frequented these institutions in the zone on a number of occasions—and even in this place, where I came in the other day—there are parks available. There are temporary car parks, for instance between the National Library and Questacon, down by the lake—that is the dirt and gravel thing—and people turn to that. I have to go to the National Library from time to time in the conduct of business and I do not have any trouble parking in a two-hour bay at the front at most times. I have been slugged with a ticket a couple of times where a meeting has taken me over the two hours.

Senator HOGG—That is an important point in itself—for you to be able to conduct your business and others to be able to conduct business as well. It seems to me that there needs to be some flexibility in the system as well.

Mr McDevitt—Sure. And when you speak about the union's position on whether there should be two classes or whatever, that opens up a whole can of worms. For instance, in the certified agreement of the Department of the Treasury there is a clause which says, 'If pay parking is introduced there will be no disadvantage to our employees.' Now we are not fortunate enough to have that clause elsewhere. But clearly the union would be making sure that our members in Treasury were not disadvantaged in accordance with their certified agreement.

If the FBT is triggered and that impost goes on to these agencies, which we all know are fiscally challenged, that cost is going to be passed on. I suppose that is a real concern to me, having been responsible for negotiating certified agreements for places like the National Library and the National Gallery in which we have to come up with productivities and the measure of those productivities is often aligned to, in the minister's words, bums on seats, box office shows and people through the door. So anything that restricts that sort of access or patronage will make it more difficult to demonstrate productivity. It is an assumption of mine that, if there is a greater cost in attending or accessing these national collections, then there will be less patronage, which I believe will translate into pressure down through the ranks, which will hit people again. Certainly the National Archives make this point. They say that all their PR and everything else is not consistent with this and they make the point that there is little support that the introduction of paid parking in the zone is good public policy.

Mr NEVILLE—Do you have any figures on how many of your members or how many public servants in general take their cars to work?

Mr Reynolds—No, we do not. Our survey relied on self-responding.

Mr NEVILLE—I just make the point that if you did it would be interesting to see how the number of cars that are taken into the parliamentary triangle compares with Tuggeranong or Belconnen. Going on the charts that have been supplied to the committee, it would seem that of all the people that go to work 86 per cent use a car. The point I am making is that perhaps there are brothers and sisters who go to work together or there is a parent and child or there is a husband and wife who go to work together and hence you would not want 100 per cent. If you take into account the Commonwealth parking requirements and disabled parking, that figure goes up to 97 per cent, so somewhere between 86 and 97 per cent is probably the right figure.

Mr Reynolds—Yes.

Mr NEVILLE—I am not sure where it is but we might say, for argument's sake, that it is about 92 per cent or something like that, so in the planning of any future buildings there would need to be a requirement for at least 92 per cent of the staff to have access to parking. Would that be a fair assumption?

Mr Reynolds—If you are extrapolating that from the figures you have indicated, that would be correct. But it raises a very interesting point: how can government agencies and the union working with government agencies assist car pooling and encourage car pooling, which can be another focus—probably a better focus—for the greenhouse strategy and for lowering the impact in this area than would be a concentration on commercial paid parking? But it is something that we will follow up with government agencies because there probably are people living in the same street and going to work at similar times who do take separate vehicles. If people could car pool obviously that would be worth while.

Mr NEVILLE—I do not think it would drag that figure down too much.

Mr Reynolds—I do not think it would drag it down. If we can drag it down somewhat, it will alleviate the pressure but, on the figures that you have extrapolated—and I am assuming that it is coming from the National Capital Authority submission, which provides such figures—then that

would be the impact. If 86-plus per cent of people are using their cars for every new building, then 86-plus per cent of employees in that building will be needing their cars. So when you build the ecumenical centre, which is a very worthwhile centre to build close by, you cut off significant car parks to the Edmund Barton Building without any consideration or when you build 38 Sydney Avenue, on the corner of Sydney Avenue and State Circle, there certainly is not 86-plus per cent of car parks available for the people in that building.

Mr NEVILLE—I am very sympathetic to the view that Senator Hogg has that the national institutions carry with them an inalienable right for all Australians, be they in Canberra or elsewhere, to be able to go to those institutions at any time. We have to have a mechanism that protects that. I also take your point that, as the buildings start to encroach onto that area, there are going to be pressures. Perhaps we should be looking at some requirement in future planning for the national capital that car parking be a requirement for that. If not, one way or another we are going to impinge on our national institutions.

Mr Reynolds—That is right. The parking of people going into those buildings will slowly encroach onto people's access to the people's place. It is right and proper that car parking should be included in the planning of these things, but so should those other initiatives for minimising the use of car travel.

Mr McDevitt—Could I just revisit the question that you posed about the 92 per cent average and the requirement for any new development to provide that. One way of realistically bringing that figure down would be if there were an analysis done of the vacant land-holdings—and perhaps there needs to be—and adjustments made to the plan to alleviate that pressure. For instance, there might be 20 vacant blocks down there—I know there are a hell of a lot—that are earmarked for development. Perhaps two of those should be pulled to one side for dedicated parking if that is a necessary part of the planning process. Therefore, if as a developer I wanted to build a new building, I would not have to provide 92 per cent, because the plan would allow for 20 per cent, or whatever, of my occupants to have access to these car parks. That is the sort of raw, basic planning that I would have thought would have underpinned the development in those areas.

CHAIRMAN—Mr Reynolds and Mr McDevitt, I thank you on behalf of the committee for your attendance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information, the secretary will write to you. Could I just ask once again that those people who work in the parliamentary zone contact the committee today via email, if that is possible or practicable. The committee would like to know how you travelled to work this morning. Did you use public transport? If not, why not? Where did you park your vehicle? You can email the committee at jsncet@aph.gov.au.

[10.45 a.m.]

JONES, Mr Michael Damien, Group Manager, Corporate Strategy and Support, Australian Public Service Commission

CHAIRMAN—Welcome. These proceedings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received a submission, numbered 34, from the Australian Public Service Commission. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Jones—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public, but, if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee, you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask you some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Jones—Yes, I would like to make a short opening statement. Our interests in the inquiry are largely those of an employer, but, also, of an organisation that has visitors come to transact business with us. We have four primary points that we wish the inquiry to consider. They are not particularly remarkable and I think they are covered in large part by other organisations, but they are a set of views that are also our own.

The first issue is that our employees take account of issues such as free parking, albeit limited free parking, in considering the context in which their package of terms and conditions apply in working for us. In a sense, that is one of the things traded against the lack of immediate availability of services and some of the other conditions available to people in other parts of Canberra. So parking is a very significant issue for our people in considering their employment context.

The second issue that I would like to mention is the lack of availability of services in the immediate work area, which means that, if our staff wish to transact any business, whether that be filling a script, as the CPSU cited as an example, or going to the bank or simply doing a bit of shopping, they need to leave the area and go to an adjoining area such as Kingston or Manuka or perhaps Woden or the city. So there is a lack of available services there and that is part of the quid pro quo.

The third issue we would like to raise for the committee's consideration is the perceived lack of available public transport to the area. That is not simply a matter of whether there are a suitable number of buses available in the 8 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. corridor or the 5 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. corridor. Increasingly, public servants work long and extensive hours, particularly in the parliamentary triangle. People cite the budget as an example, but Senate estimates is another example. Any heavy period of legislation or policy development causes remarkable hours. They are incidents that take people outside their normal patterns, but there is no 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. pattern as the norm in the Public Service these days. Increasingly, people take advantage of the

flexible hours that are available to them to balance work, non-work and family responsibilities—people have caring responsibilities or drop children at childcare and the like and people work part time. So there is that set of family and community interests that people have as well as their work obligations. The view amongst our staff is that the availability of transport in no way meets those needs. For people working in that area, there is a need for transport at lunchtime. If they were using buses to and from work, they would need a good supply of public transport to take them to and from the commercial areas to transact their private and social business at lunchtime.

The final point we would like to make is that the commission receives visitors on a daily basis to transact business. They are individuals or small groups of public servants from other organisations or sectors. We also have a regular stream of foreign visitors representing other governments. All of those people report that there is inadequate parking for short-term visitors to the commission. Many regular visitors to the commission from other organisations state that their practice now is to travel by taxi because it is too difficult to find parking.

CHAIRMAN—The National Capital Authority's plan seems to be aimed at increasing benefits for the temporary visitor—and I am not opposed to that. I think they should be taken into consideration. But the consideration that is due to those employed within the zone does not seem to be given, nor are they taken as seriously as the temporary visitor. Could you comment on that concept? There is also a perception that exists throughout Australia that, where there is paid car parking, it is a revenue raising facility—not necessarily from the money that goes into the metres but through the overstay, where there are quite significant fines for overstaying your time, and that seems to be where the revenue is coming from. Do you share those perceptions?

Mr Jones—I do not think that I can comment on the revenue issue. Our perspective on this is as an employer with concern for our staff. We do not have a policy interest in this issue. There is obviously a real tension for the planners of being able to provide adequate parking and transport for workers, who are there for a full and extended day, and the needs of visitors, whether they be to the institutions or there to transact business. We do not have a ready answer to that challenge; it is not our business and it is not our area of expertise, but we recognise that it is a difficult tension for the planners and it is a challenge for their profession.

CHAIRMAN—Have there been any plans drawn to your attention that would include but not be limited to the increase in frequency of public transport at appropriate times and the possibility of using motor vehicles within the precinct we are talking about, where there are multiple passengers in the vehicle—something akin to but not the same as Singapore city?

Mr Jones—We have not had any plans of that type brought to our attention.

CHAIRMAN—Would you endorse plans of that nature?

Mr Jones—We would support any plans that (a) made parking more readily available for people, including our staff travelling to the area or (b) made public transport a more attractive option for them so that there was a lesser call on the existing parking facilities.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I am wondering if you have a specific environmental policy or strategy and you are committed to the greenhouse strategy as has been outlined nationally.

Mr Jones—We obviously have an interest in greenhouse, as any responsible employer does, and we look at that in the way that our buildings are managed and in the use of resources. Our interest is somewhat modest compared to some because we are a small co-tenant in large buildings and do not have much control over how things operate, but as a responsible employer we obviously have an interest.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—Obviously one of the so-called motivations behind this strategy or this proposal is an environmental one. Do you have any comment on that?

Mr Jones—There are probably tensions between environmental motives and fiscal motives. There must be policies that can actually serve both purposes. If there are ways of reducing the need for publicly funded parking, then there is some alleviation of fiscal motives and a reduction in the number of car visits and pollution in the area. Those are motives that are not necessarily against each other.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I do not think they have to be mutually exclusive, and I prefer carrots as opposed to sticks. On that point I am wondering if there are any incentives that you think could be provided to people to minimise their use of car transport without necessarily resorting to a paid parking arrangement. Do you have any ideas as to what could be introduced?

Mr Jones—Only an anecdotal comment from staff in particular, which is that if public transport was more adequate there would be a better inclination to make use of it.

Ms ELLIS—Thank you, Mr Jones, for being here with us this morning. How many employees are there on site in your office?

Mr Jones—Approximately 150.

Ms ELLIS—There is a paddock out the back of the Edmund Barton Building, isn't there, or is it the Robert Garran Offices that I am thinking of?

Mr Jones—There was a paddock out the back but it has had a building put on it. It is the ecumenical centre.

Ms ELLIS—Are you aware of how many on-site parking places have been made available for your commission?

Mr Jones—Within our building?

Ms ELLIS—Yes.

Mr Jones—It would be about 17.

Ms ELLIS—Okay, so let us say 17 out of 150.

Mr Jones—Yes, and those 17 are all reserved and allocated spots under the building for senior staff and VIP visitors.

Ms ELLIS—To your knowledge where do the rest of your employees park?

Mr Jones—This is actually quite quirky because, strictly speaking, we are outside the parliamentary triangle. We are on the wrong side of Kings Avenue but most of them park in the building on the other side of Kings Avenue. They trespass on the parliamentary triangle and cross Kings Avenue to work in Barton.

Ms ELLIS—This is the point that I want to make. You are categorised as Barton, for the sake of this discussion, and your 90-odd extra employees who use their cars, other than the ones who have a reserved space in the basement or wherever, park over the road in the area of roughly what?

Mr Jones—In the car park between Kings Avenue and the Robert Garran building.

Ms ELLIS—Which is within the triangle, the zone that we are talking about?

Mr Jones—Yes. The later arrivals park at places such as the National Gallery or behind the National Archives, some distance away. This is an aside but most of the people who are the late starters are the people with parenting responsibilities, who are dropping kids at childcare, or the part-time workers.

Ms ELLIS—What do you mean by late arrivals—at 9 o'clock?

Mr Jones—Between 9 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. would be the range. A good number of those end up parking in places like that behind the National Archives. It is actually on the parliamentary side of the Archives. It is a good distance from work.

Ms ELLIS—In your remarks earlier you made the point about the supply of non-peak period public transport being very pertinent to the discussion that we are having this morning. Given that we know that the Department of Defence, as a very large employer based at Russell—let us hypothesise for a second—run a shuttle service, can you see the need for something like that to be thought about within the area of the commission? Would that work?

Mr Jones—I am not sure that that would be the solution because it is more a matter of there being available travel from the suburbs to the parliamentary triangle.

Ms ELLIS—I am sorry, I did not explain myself clearly. I am thinking more in terms of accessing services. If they were to come in in the peak hour rush and if they wanted to get out during the day, could they use a shuttle service or something like that?

Mr Jones—Or some kind of loop arrangement to Manuka and the Kingston shops, and one to Civic or something?

Ms ELLIS—Yes, as an additional incentive.

Mr Jones—Yes, that might offer some possibilities.

Ms ELLIS—It would not solve all of the problems. Do you have very many people who work in your commission part time, those who may come in for X number of hours a day outside the normal working period?

Mr Jones—Yes, we have quite a reasonable level of part-time workers. I cannot give you a figure; I could get it.

Ms ELLIS—That is okay, but they do exist?

Mr Jones—Yes. We have quite heavy use of part-time work. We have a large number of staff who are in the 30 to 45 age group. We have a high proportion of women. We are nearly 60 per cent women. There has been a high take-up of part-time work.

Ms ELLIS—So, to put it in colloquial terms, to say that they would have Buckley's of getting a car park, if they are arriving at 10.00 a.m. and going home at 3.00 p.m. or something, would be an understatement?

Mr Jones—They walk a long way and say bad words when they arrive in the office.

Ms ELLIS—So the fact they are travelling in non-peak periods almost forces them to use a car?

Mr Jones—Yes, that is certainly their view.

Mr NEVILLE—I heard your response to Senator Stott Despoja about more public transport, but the reality is that there are going to be more public buildings there and more people employed on the site. Not all of them are going to come there on public transport, even on the most optimistic predictions. What is your organisation's vision of how parking might be increased there in an appropriate manner? I do not think you solve the problem by just putting high fees on things and driving people elsewhere. What is the vision?

Mr Jones—I would have thought there are two legs to the answer. The first one is that you would do something about public transport. In the scenario you described, where there would be an increasing number rather than a decreasing number of people working in the area, surely that makes the extended provision of public transport more possible for the providers. When you extend public transport, you reduce pressure on the existing parking arrangements. I would have thought that better provision of public transport is the key element to improving the arrangements in the parliamentary triangle and related areas.

Mr NEVILLE—You do not have any vision for what form future parking should take?

Mr Jones—Not particularly.

Mr NEVILLE—When we went around and had a look at all of this—and this is anecdotal; we were in a minibus and we did not go under every building—I had a very distinct sense that, under every building, there were car parks for the executives and lots of car parks under public buildings that were not taken up. I did not see any bays specifically marked for visitors or people

who need to do business at those particular government agencies. What is your perception of that?

Mr Jones—I can obviously only comment on the Edmund Barton Building, in which I work. All of the parking spaces in the basement of that building are taken up. Whenever we try to get additional parking, it is just not available to us—and this is parking for which we pay. At the entrance to the building there are a very small number of visitor parking bays—only a handful, for a very big building.

Senator HOGG—You are saying that the planning for those buildings in the first instance was not correct? I am not asking you as a planning expert, just as a layperson.

Mr Jones—I think that is right. There could obviously have been better provision of parking for visitors, but, in terms of the whole area, there could have been better planning of parking for staff working in the area. Having said that, if you took a picture of the area two years ago, you would not have had the ecumenical centre or the landmark building currently under construction. So places that were once car parks are now buildings. The other element to that is that, whenever there is construction going on, there is another body of people working in the area that makes a call on parking and that generally starts at an earlier time than the clerical staff.

Senator HOGG—If I can just personalise this—and you will have heard us ask this question—did you drive to work this morning?

Mr Jones—Yes, I did.

Senator HOGG—I presume you would. I presume you have one of those spaces that are set aside.

Mr Jones—I drove to work from Kingston—you can laugh at that.

Senator HOGG—No, I am not laughing, because I think that is a serious issue. Why did you drive?

Mr Jones—I will run through that. I drive to work from Kingston. It is not very far. I have a space under the building. Part of the arrangement of providing me, as a senior executive, with a leased vehicle is that the vehicle is available for staff to use for work purposes during the day. And it is used—every day my car goes to the bank and up here, delivering material to our minister and so on. I drove up here today and most of the places I used to park up here I cannot park in now because they are closed. But I was fortunate because I have a vehicle that is provided for me and it has a class B parking place and I can park close to the building. I drove around the car parks across the road and people were up on the gutters and all sorts of places. I thought I was going to suffer the ignominy of ringing the secretariat and saying, ‘There is an inquiry on pay parking and I’m going to be late because I can’t get a park.’

Senator HOGG—I like it!

Ms ELLIS—It would have been noted!

Senator HOGG—Assuming you did not have a car park provided, would you use public transport to go from where you live at Kingston to your place of work?

Mr Jones—No. I would be more likely to walk, because it is only a matter of 1½ kilometres.

Senator HOGG—You would be the exception rather than the rule.

Ms ELLIS—Absolutely.

Senator HOGG—Would public transport be readily available to take you to work?

Mr Jones—From where I live, public transport would be reasonable.

Senator HOGG—I am just trying to build up a picture as we go.

Ms ELLIS—That is the irony. You live within walking distance, but public transport is viable.

Mr Jones—It is also viable because it is not critical. Because of my proximity, I would settle for a lower level of service than others would who are much more dependent.

Ms ELLIS—Exactly.

Senator HOGG—Thank you. That is a good point.

CHAIRMAN—Mr Jones, on behalf of the committee I thank you for your attendance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information, the secretary will write to you.

[11.07 a.m.]

FLAVELL, Mr Stuart Roy, Director, Contract and Facilities, National Library of Australia

LINEHAN, Mr Gerry, Assistant Director-General, Corporate Services, National Library of Australia

CHAIRMAN—Welcome. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received a submission, numbered 9, from the National Library of Australia. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Linehan—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public, but if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your request. Before we ask you some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Linehan—Yes. Just by way of background, the library has a core staff of around 535, which includes 70 volunteers. We do not, apart from a loading dock and small service yards, have any parking that belongs to the institution. We are open as a service provider seven days a week and, unlike most other organisations, we are open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday to Thursday. We receive approximately 460,000 visitors per annum, of which 100,000 would relate to exhibitions. The majority of our clients are not tourists but readers, and the average stay for all clients is about three to four hours at the library.

The main problems we have with parking at the moment relate generally to the upkeep of the area—such as the surface and lighting—and security for our clients and staff in respect of those. The library's preferences for parking in the zone, in order, would be to ensure that parking arrangements meet the needs of visitors and staff, to improve the parking facilities in the zone and to provide these free of charge wherever possible. If charges were to be imposed, we would request that these be limited to normal business hours and that the parking facilities be located close to the institutions to promote ease of access. We think that the fees should be as low as reasonably possible in that regard.

There are two broad concerns we have in relation to parking in general. The first is affordability. It should be noted that 50 per cent of our readers are either students, citizens or the unemployed, and 45 per cent of visitors to the exhibitions are senior citizens. Over 20 per cent of our readers visit the library more than 50 times in a six-month period, and some 13 per cent of readers visit the library between 21 and 50 times in a six-month period. As I mentioned earlier, we have 70 volunteers that donate their time free of charge to the library. We also have concerns about the increased costs for staff. We suspect that our staffing profile is lower-paid staff, on average, compared to a number of the other organisations within the parliamentary zone. We are

also aware that there would be administrative costs for agencies to manage peripheral issues associated with pay parking.

The other issue we want to raise is location. We would prefer any facility to be close to the institutions, not at a distance. Otherwise we see issues relating to the adequacy of public transport to the area, and safety and security, noting in particular our late-night closures. We note also that the extra personal items of visitors may need to be housed on-site if they are traversing from long distances from some of those areas. A valid point that should be noted there is that 70 per cent of our staff are female. Regarding the access to facilities around the area, we raised in our submission comments about having immediate access to banks and shops. We note that they will only set up in the area if it is commercially viable. In one sense, we see some inequities in that some institutions have a considerable amount of their own parking spaces within their buildings, whereas the library, as we mentioned before, has virtually none.

Mr NEVILLE—You have taken a different line from the previous witnesses. You would like to see parking improved or increased. What is your vision of what form that would take?

Mr Linehan—In the context of improving parking in the zone, the two issues we have are the surface and the lighting. We share the parking facility behind Questacon, which is roughly a dirt car park. There have been some issues there in ensuring that the surface is appropriate. It is particularly difficult, as you can imagine, in wet weather. Lighting is a major issue. There is no lighting in the area, and with its considerable use that does pose a security risk for our staff.

Mr NEVILLE—That is a more immediate thing for your own attention. That could be solved by a few loads of crusher dust and a few lights. I am talking about a vision of parking as part of the National Capital Plan. We are going to get more buildings there—that is inevitable—so what is your vision?

Mr Linehan—One element of the vision would be to look at underground parking. If there are concerns about the aesthetics et cetera, that is an option that is available—having that provided close to the facility.

Mr NEVILLE—What is your view on having a special form of parking for the national institutions?

Mr Linehan—From a library perspective, we think we should have some special parking for our institution, particularly in relation to readers and volunteers.

Mr NEVILLE—So if they have a great car park over at the National Library, how do you police that so that the people who are there are actually library users and staff?

Mr Linehan—One way would be to do it in a more general sense. You could institute boom gate systems with staff passes to enable staff to gain access at certain times. One of the issues that we have there—it was raised in previous discussions—is that we have a number of part-time staff. Also, staff work long hours and at night, so they have a lot of difficulty in gaining car parks during the day.

Mr NEVILLE—Where do your executive staff park?

Mr Linehan—We have a number—I think fewer than 20, I cannot quote—of reserved B class special parking arrangements which they park in.

Mr NEVILLE—Do you have any dedicated parking spaces for the library itself?

Mr Linehan—No. All we have is a loading bay which may house—

Mr NEVILLE—At the front steps there?

Mr Linehan—No, actually at the back of the library opposite the Treasury building. It would house perhaps 12 or so spaces as well as provide for a number of disabled parking spaces.

Mr NEVILLE—Thank you.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—Mr Linehan, you mentioned that you have 70 volunteers. Do they get paid in any way—an honorarium, a per diem, any assistance?

Mr Linehan—Not that I am aware of, no.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—So with pay parking they would incur parking costs?

Mr Linehan—They would incur those additional costs, yes.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I understand that most libraries usually struggle for resources and volunteers. Do you see that as something that could have a deleterious impact on the people who would be willing to assist the National Library?

Mr Linehan—Yes, I think that there would be an impact—it would be hard to quantify—and we would have concerns at any impact which could lead to reduction in volunteers and like support that we receive.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I note your response to Mr Neville's questioning about the need for more parking—and safe and secure parking, which I think is very important. But I do note that when you list your preferences in descending order you talk about—obviously your preference is for free of charge parking. But when you talk about whether charges are to be imposed, you also talk about fees being as low as possible. Do you have any costs in mind? I know that is a tough question but, in terms of reasonableness, are you talking of different rates for concession, for disabled—what did you envisage by that particular statement?

Mr Linehan—I think in the context of preferences our first point was 'free'—and I think that is where all our focus has been—and thereafter keep them as low as possible. We have not given thought to what the charges would be, but in the context of—as we have mentioned before—50 per cent of our readers being unemployed, students or elderly, there are some significant issues. And with multiple use of the facility—as I mentioned before, up to over 50 times in a six-month period—we would have some major concerns about any charges in that regard.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—On the issue of charges—I am not sure if the committee will allow my indulgence or whether I should put this on record—but I would like to know if the National Library charges GST on interlibrary loans.

Mr Linehan—I think the answer is no. I would have to take that on notice, but I think the answer is no.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I would appreciate that, with the chairman's permission.

CHAIRMAN—Yes.

Senator HOGG—In respect of these repeat visitors that you have, I think you said 20 per cent visit 50 times in a six-month period. That is a fairly high usage rate. Are they students predominantly, or—

Mr Linehan—I do not have that exact information. I would imagine that they would be virtually full-time researchers and things like that. They may be students et cetera. I can come back to you with that information.

Senator HOGG—All right, if you could. With respect to the 70 volunteers that you have, do they come in early in the morning or do they come in after peak hour public transport? How do they get there; do you know?

Mr Linehan—I could not answer directly on how they get there. I can say that overall between about 70 and 80 per cent of our staff use vehicles to travel to work and home.

Senator HOGG—Why do they use vehicles? Is it purely a matter of convenience or is it the fact that the public transport system is no good? Is it your location?

Mr Linehan—There can be a whole range of issues—public transport; family responsibilities, whether it is dropping children off before or after school; the time factor, which obviously becomes an issue. We have not done any particular surveys other than a broad straw poll just to get an idea of the numbers that travel.

Senator HOGG—If you could get an idea of how these volunteers would be affected, I would be interested in that.

Mr Linehan—Certainly.

Senator HOGG—The other question that I have asked people today is: how did you get to work today?

Mr Linehan—I drove.

Senator HOGG—I presume you have a car park. If you faced not having a car park, would you use the public transport system to get to work?

Mr Linehan—I would not be able to. I drop a daughter at school and pick sons up after football training and things like that.

Senator HOGG—I understand those responsibilities well. You have my sympathies.

Mr Flavell—I drove. I live in Griffith. I am in a similar circumstance to the previous witness. I do not have a car park allocated to me. I choose to drive because I have streamlined my life and I know exactly how many minutes I can stay in bed and still get to work. It would take longer if I took public transport or walked. I also share the household responsibilities, so I pay bills and do some night shopping and things of that nature, and it is convenient to utilise a car.

Mr Linehan—For the record, I share the household responsibilities.

Senator HOGG—I am not trying to embarrass anyone. I think this really gets down to the everyday issues that are confronted by very ordinary people faced with working in a difficult set of circumstances. It is important to get some of that on the *Hansard* record. I will not tell you what my solution to the problem is.

Ms ELLIS—Where do you travel from, Mr Linehan? How far away is it?

Mr Linehan—Theodore.

Ms ELLIS—A substantial distance.

Mr Linehan—I would imagine it would be 20 kilometres.

Ms ELLIS—I was out of the room for a couple of minutes and excuse me if this question has already been asked. Senator Hogg referred to the issue briefly. Even though you do not have any parking land or parking structure allocated to the library, do you share the longer stay park with the Treasury building? Do you have allocated places?

Mr Linehan—No. Outside of some specific B class facilities that are reserved for library staff, we share all our parking with the institutions.

Ms ELLIS—With whoever?

Mr Linehan—Yes. Mostly it would be behind Questacon—the dirt car park—and I am aware that staff in the Treasury building also use our car park as well.

Ms ELLIS—It is really important for us to understand this. So your car has a B sticker. It is a Commonwealth car and it allows you to get into nominated places. Does the number of staff in your facility carrying that sticker equate with the number of places available for that use, or is there a bit of a rush?

Mr Linehan—We have about 18 or so B class spaces, with probably 10 or so that are used from within the library, but they are also available for visitors to use as well with similar stickers.

Ms ELLIS—People like me who use the library?

Mr Linehan—Yes.

CHAIRMAN—What is your personal view as to a solution or at least a partial solution to the parking problem?

Mr Linehan—From my perspective, if we are doing further development, it is to try to include car parking facilities within those developments. I mentioned before that one of the options that we see available is underground parking. You might be aware that the library has two lower ground floors that we mostly use for collection areas.

CHAIRMAN—Are they used to the maximum?

Mr Linehan—Certainly yes, and there is always continuing pressure with the growing size of the collection. We also have warehouses out at Hume.

CHAIRMAN—Mr Flavell?

Mr Flavell—Increased amenities and better public transport but I am pessimistic that better public transport will necessarily assist the situation. I base that partly on personal experience. For 12 months I worked in London and I had to use public transport. I could have remained in London, but one of the many reasons why I chose to return to Canberra was the lifestyle and the fact that I had independence in terms of the mode of transport.

CHAIRMAN—Do you think the proposal to make bus transport more direct and express from some of the outlying centres into the CBD would solve some of the problems? Is that the big disincentive—that there are too many stops and as a consequence the time spent on the bus is too long?

Mr Linehan—There are certainly issues with the time it takes on the bus. Some of those express buses only operate during peak times and do not necessarily suit staff who work irregular hours. In terms of the general bus service, we also need to be aware of the security issues. As I mentioned before, 70 per cent of staff are female and, while security issues are relevant for all staff, they are travelling after dark to various areas and distances and that causes challenges as well.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you, gentlemen for your attendance here today.

[11.26 a.m.]

ADAMOPOULOS, Mr Spiro (Private capacity)

RICHARDS, Mr Michael James (Private capacity)

CHAIRMAN—Welcome, gentlemen. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Adamopoulos—I am a public servant.

Mr Richards—I too am a public servant.

CHAIRMAN—These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received submissions, numbered 17 and 10, from Mr Adamopoulos and Mr Michael Richards. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submissions?

Mr Richards—No.

Mr Adamopoulos—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public, but if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask you some questions, do either of you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Richards—I would like to make a brief opening statement. I am professionally employed as a historian and perhaps I might be accused of living in the past. I also live at Murrumbateman, which is a round-trip of around 84 kilometres from my place of work, which is just down the hill at Old Parliament House. Living in the past, perhaps, I am very conscious of the way Canberra used to work—of the way in which people who earned comparatively little were able to spend rich and full lives here, cycling to work, catching the bus to work or even walking to work. The city contained a full range of incomes—of classes, if you like, of people.

We have moved on. We cannot live in the past. But we have a city which still needs a whole range of people—the people who do not earn a great deal of money, the people who are at the beginnings of their careers, the people who have comparatively humble careers—and they need to be able to get to work. Without them the parliament and the various departments would grind to a halt. They cannot live within those easy distances of the city anymore. They have to drive or catch one of an increasingly expensive and inconvenient number of buses.

I choose to live at Murrumbateman. That is a long way away; I could live closer. I am not claiming to be unable to afford buses or, indeed, pay parking. But Murrumbateman is just beyond the limits that the planners envisaged as being where Canberra's population would grow.

It is just beyond the new town of Jeir that was envisaged as the north-western part of the Y plan back in the 1970s. Although there has been some movement at the edges, our development has not changed since that plan of the 1970s. We are still putting people miles away—I should say kilometres away.

I simply wanted to take this opportunity, which in our democratic system I can do—and I am deeply appreciative of that—to say that I think the planners have got it wrong. They have started at the wrong end of the equation. The implementation of pay parking is the stick; we need to the carrot. We need the land to be opened up for a range of affordable housing options that are close enough to the places where people work so that they can use alternatives. That is my feeling.

CHAIRMAN—That was very interesting, Mr Richards. Mr Adamopoulos?

Mr Adamopoulos—In my submission I am suggesting that we have moved on from 1924 when the buildings within the parliamentary triangle serviced a parliament that was in its infancy. We have moved on since then with high technology. The City of Canberra has developed; it has spread. And I suggest that the planners have not kept up with that particular pace. My assertion is that Treasury can lose money on share swap deals within the parliamentary triangle as well as it can 200 miles away—I am a miles person as well. I suggest that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry might do its work in Orange, as does the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, as well as it can do it right here in Canberra—and probably would see itself as embracing its constituency. I suggest the Department of the Environment and Heritage can do its job as well outside of the parliamentary triangle as it can within the parliamentary triangle, and probably be seen to be a lot greener. I suggest that the Department of Transport and Regional Services can do its job as well outside of the parliamentary triangle as it can here.

On that basis, I have a vision. Mr Neville has quite rightly asked other witnesses: ‘What is your vision?’ I have a vision and that vision is to take the buildings out of the parliamentary triangle. If parliamentarians want their public servants to be within the parliamentary triangle, then they must provide them with parking. I do not think that the National Library should have to charge tourists to come here. I think that is ridiculous. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you very much, Mr Adamopoulos. Mr Richards, you spoke in your contribution, in the initial stages at least, about the change to Canberra. Would you be kind enough to tell the committee how that change was manifested, perhaps in dot points, and why you believe there was a change? What caused the change?

Mr Richards—You must remember that Walter Burley Griffin was told to design a city that would grow to about 30,000, and no-one had any idea that the city and the Public Service would grow to the extent that it has. That was pretty much the way Canberra was until the 1950s, partly because of the Depression, which slowed the rate of growth, but also because the Public Service departments were located in Melbourne.

CHAIRMAN—Do you mean the Great Depression?

Mr Richards—Yes. There were various inefficiencies associated with that but it is interesting, to take up Mr Adamopoulos’s point, that we fought World War II with the Public Service in

Melbourne and the parliament in Canberra. The great change took place in the 1950s, and the engine was the decision to bring the big Public Service departments up from Melbourne. The city expanded beyond the valley that had been chosen as the appropriate site for the national capital.

The growth that took place was essentially within the valleys—there was an attempt to preserve the Griffin vision of not building on the hills, which I think is arguable—until the parking issue or the traffic issue began to loom large for the NCDC in the sixties. They had built a city where all the interchange was going to take place around this building, in effect—around City Hill. That massive roundabout which preceded the parliament was there as one of the major interchanges. The parliament of the day suspected it was also an attempt to prevent the building of the parliament on the hill, because the NCDC had a vision of parliament down by the lake, and that was a great debate of the day. But I think it was essentially—from my reading; and I am not an expert in the history of traffic in Canberra—a traffic based decision.

When they started to realise that Canberra was going to get to 250,000 or more—and, in fact, the NCDC was working in the 1970s with population projections of up to a million by the end of the century—they called in American experts. From that came the Y plan. The American advice was based, perhaps predictably, on the motor car: on cheap petrol, on ready availability of motor cars, on freeways that would link a series of new towns. So, as the population grew, the plan changed, and the expansion began in this familiar Y shape.

Various attempts were made to negotiate agreements with New South Wales to spill over the border. My understanding is that there are agreements in place, should they ever be needed, to keep building towards Sutton and Gundaroo in the north-eastern direction and towards Murrumbateman and Yass in the north-western direction. That is unlikely to happen. But that is, if you like, the major scenario; and the key element is the movement of the big departments from Melbourne in the 1950s and thereon, and the vast growth in the Public Service.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you, Mr Richards.

Ms ELLIS—Thank you both for, as Mr Richards referred to before, your democratic ability to do this. I think it is good that we have got individual submissions to this inquiry and I thank you both for doing so. Mr Adamopoulos, you list in your submission six major points about certain things you think could be considered before we get to the point that we are at now. I am interested in a couple of those dot points in particular. First, the recruitment on a locality base: what do you mean by that?

Mr Adamopoulos—I am qualified enough to get a job with the Australian Taxation Office. That is in Belconnen. I live in Belconnen. If I could get a job there, I could walk to work. Every day you see numerous Canberrans criss-crossing the capital in their shiny new cars—like my shiny new car—and burning up the petrol for reasons such as a friend has got them the job somewhere, or they like the job, or they are highly qualified, or they can do a job in Tuggeranong et cetera. My suggestion is that we need a change to our recruitment strategies so the best person for the job is the person in the local community.

Ms ELLIS—In principle, that sounds fine but what about the incomplete town centres we have here? What about if you live in Gungahlin or Tuggeranong? This is very parochial to my

colleagues. I am not disagreeing with you, but my point is that other things have to be done. That takes us to your point 3, consideration about whether departments need to be in the parliamentary zone. Comment has been made by earlier witnesses this morning, who you would have heard, about the planners not quite getting any of this right. As a local, I know that I have seen in the past advertisements in the newspapers for an expression of interest to construct a building, to house a particular department—and I will not name the department—and it had to be within, from memory, 15 minutes driving time from the airport before they would look at the expression of interest. That immediately ruled out the town centres to which I am referring, which are the town centres without sufficient work base to carry out your locality recruitment plan. So they go hand in hand, do they not? Where is the horse and where is the cart?

Mr Adamopoulos—I think what you will see is a cascading effect of what comes first. We can see that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was a bit forward thinking in establishing a car park for its employees. If you are looking at a location of 15 minutes from the airport, there would be space around that building that would accommodate at least free parking for those people who would commute to there. I am not saying that my system is perfect.

Ms ELLIS—I am not being critical of it. I am actually giving us an opportunity to flesh out all of the other issues that are relevant to what we are here today for.

Mr Adamopoulos—Most certainly. I am not suggesting at all that recruiting on a locality basis would be good enough for 100 per cent coverage, because you cannot envisage that you will get a suitably qualified person down the street. I am not as naïve as that to suggest that that might be the case. But parking for someone who is travelling from Gungahlin to a building or an office which has been built in an open space at least with a bit of vision about the parking around it I think could be accommodated.

Ms ELLIS—At the risk of being a bit critical, not of you but of the system, I would suggest that maybe the planners do have a role but I also believe that some of the past senior public servants also have a role in where we are at now. I think it would be acceptable in this town to understand that some of the decisions that have been made about the development in those outer areas have in fact been relative to the view of the head of the department or the senior people in the department at the time not wanting to travel to Belconnen or Tuggeranong to their workplace. I am being critical of that, because it has curtailed the development of suitable workplaces there.

Mr Richards, I am enjoying your submission immensely because it brings up a lot of old planning and historical issues for the ACT, many of which we are aware of. The Y plan is something that is trotted out frequently as a point of discussion. I would like to raise—it is relative indirectly to what we are here for today—your discussion about housing, affordable housing, where it goes and how that relates to workplace and opportunity and so on. I think that is what you are getting at. I share your view that it is a pity that economics of real estate and values and how we place those actually has a big role to play in where people can afford to live. People who can afford to live in the southern end of Tuggeranong find it very difficult to get close to a workplace. Can you expand on your views on this? Can we talk more about what you think about this and what could be done in a realistic way?

Mr Richards—Again I would like to go back to the past. When Canberra was first planned, it was a very planned city and there was an allocation of land, housing and size of house according to your classification in the Public Service. There were suburbs that were designated for various classifications. We had moved away from that but I think we are moving back to that. I think that is a deeply unfortunate, undemocratic and indeed wrong thing—people will find their only neighbours are people who earn much the same sort of money. It is wrong for the rich; it is wrong for the poor. Above all, it is wrong for the children of those neighbourhoods to grow up like that, knowing only one type of person.

If Canberra is indeed a large country town—and I happen to think it is; it is a very nice country town and I am very pleased to work and live here—one of the good things about country towns is that you do get a democratic mix. I think a valid part of social planning is to enable that sort of mix to continue so that affordable housing is placed where there is also quite expensive housing so that you can find people of many different backgrounds and many different career paths and at many different times of their lives. We have so many suburbs around the heart of Canberra now where there are hardly any kids, because people moved in and had their families and their families have left home, and no-one else can afford to move in until they too have seen their children leave home.

Ms ELLIS—In terms of the purpose of the inquiry today, what you are basically saying—and correct me if I am wrong—is that the target would be to know that the lower ranking, lower paid public servant could walk to work in the parliamentary triangle as easily as the gentleman from Kingston earlier this morning.

Mr Richards—Or ride a bicycle or perhaps catch a train and then ride a bicycle at the end of it.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—Most of my questions have been asked. But I am wondering, Mr Richards, if you want to expand at all on the public transport issue. I take your comments—and they are both very interesting submissions—about the poor servicing of communities these days in Canberra, which I think is an important part of the broader issues that we are covering in this inquiry. On the public transport issue in particular, because I think that is a real key, is there anything further that you or Mr Adamopoulos would like to say? Are there pricing issues, concession rate issues, cost issues or transport route issues that you would specifically talk about to assist the inquiry? This is partly because when we talk to the government and other agencies it might be possible to put to them particular areas or suburbs that are not being adequately looked after in this way. I am not sure whether both of you want to comment further on that issue.

Mr Richards—As I say, I am not in any sense an expert on public transport, but it does seem to me that there are public transport needs in Canberra. If you get in a car and try to drive from, say, the city centre to Belconnen any time between about 4.50 p.m. and 5.50 p.m., you will find that there are thousands of cars on the road, mostly with one person in them. I think those people could commute if there was a viable public transport alternative. The difficulty is that the nature of the jobs that we have in Canberra often requires you to work quite unsociable hours. Either you need to get in early or you need to work late. Public transport in a city of our size cannot operate to meet those needs. It is simply uneconomic. So people use their cars. The other problem is that, if people use the car some of the time because they have to, they will use the car

all the time because it is simply much more convenient. I think that the answer is not easy. There is a need for more public transport and more flexible public transport.

Prior to going to live at Murrumbateman, I lived at Aranda, which is very much closer in. It took an hour to get from Aranda to Barton by public transport. That is a 10-minute journey by car and a 15- or 20-minute journey by bicycle. I do not think there is any easy way around that. I think the car is something we have to live with at the moment. So my issue, from an equity point of view, is to not, therefore, penalise those who have to run a car but then have to meet those other expenses.

I might add that the people who have free parking guaranteed to them in the parliamentary triangle are members of the SES, the senior executive service, and I think that is perfectly legitimate. They are people who regularly work a 12-hour day. They need to be able to walk quickly to their car at the end of the day, particularly if it is at night, which it often is. But they are the people who can most afford to pay for parking. I think there is a huge question of equity there.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I am glad you raised equity in your statement and your submission, because I think those anecdotal stories are really important. Unlike Ms Ellis, I have not lived in Canberra since I was a kid nor at a stage where I took public transport. But anecdotal stories from my brother and friends who have lived here are: ‘To get to see you at Parliament House, Nat, is a couple of bus trips’ from wherever it may be—Woden, Deakin, Tuggeranong and other places that they have lived. I think it would be worth while, if we are surveying people here today on how they got to work, to do some broader surveys of not only the workers in the area but also the students and the people who are referred to in Mr Richards’s submission—those who may be in the home or who may feel isolated. I would like to know their views, but how we conduct that I am not sure. Maybe the chair will have some ideas. Those equity considerations are one of the things we are most concerned about. Mr Adamopoulos, would you like to comment?

Mr Adamopoulos—I echo Mr Richards’s comments. I live in Melba. I used to catch the bus. It used to take an hour. I would have to get off and hop on three times to get to Barton. Prior to that I used to ride my bike to work. That was 25 kilometres one way—50 kilometres there and back.

Ms ELLIS—Equals a very fit person.

Mr Adamopoulos—I could challenge triathletes by the end of the week, let me tell you.

Senator HOGG—You rode what I do each morning, so I am very pleased to hear that.

Mr Adamopoulos—Pre-empting this question, I do not share household duties; I do them. Unlike the previous witnesses, I go home to six mouths to feed and I do a lot of the domestic work. My wife also works, and occasionally I have to cook for the six of us. So it is not easy getting to work. It is not easy dropping off to school your 13-year-old son with his set of drums, which I had to do the other day. I chose to drive today—as I said, I have a shiny new car—simply because I got fed up with the transport system. There are no shops for me to go to in Barton. I work in the Edmund Barton Building and what is there? There is absolutely nothing.

Ms ELLIS—Exactly.

Mr Adamopoulos—I have to get into the car to go somewhere. I often walk to Kingston. It is a very nice walk; it is a very pleasant walk. Numerous banks have closed down in Kingston, so you cannot even go to a bank there now. What we have to put up with is just horrendous really. There is really nothing there, so to slap on whatever charge is being proposed here is quite inequitable, I quite agree. The SES can rock up, get out of their shiny company car, walk up the stairs or catch the lift and they are in their office.

Senator HOGG—I want to follow on from your answer—and you might have to restrain Mr Richards when I put this proposition to you. It seems to me that a real part of the problem is the lack of facilities. What if they were to build a major shopping centre in the centre of the triangle with all the facilities, including a TAB—I would hate that to be excluded—and a number of banks and everything else? The other answer to your moving various departments out of the triangle would be to move a big shopping centre into the middle of the triangle, but let us be realistic.

Ms ELLIS—Or even a medium one.

Mr Adamopoulos—That is right. I would like to think outside the triangle, actually.

Senator HOGG—So would I. But in reality that is not a realistic proposition. Immediately you say that, everyone's hackles would go up.

Mr Richards—To meet the needs of a lot of workers in the parliamentary triangle you would also have to plonk a lot of schools into that shopping centre. That is the nub of it. I too used to cycle, not from Murrumbateman but from Aranda, and then we had a child. And you cannot do that easily once you have a child. You develop a routine. Expanding on the anecdotal side of things, my family actually brings two cars into the parliamentary triangle each day because that is the only way we can do our two jobs and still have an 11-year-old dropped at school at school time and picked up at about five o'clock.

Senator HOGG—Would you be typical of a number of people working in the triangle?

Mr Richards—Very typical.

Mr Adamopoulos—Absolutely.

Senator HOGG—So it is not a matter of bringing just one car in but a matter of bringing two cars in.

Mr Richards—Yes.

Senator HOGG—And it is not even a matter of putting in a shopping centre that would accommodate all the various needs that people have outlined smack bang in the middle of the triangle. That would still not fulfil all the needs of everyone.

Mr Richards—Once you have people whose working lives cannot fit between 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m., no, it would not. I would suggest that a great many people in the parliamentary triangle, including people who are not particularly senior, work those sorts of hours. If they did not, the parliament and the departments would find they suffered hugely. It is commitment to the job that keeps people here for those hours.

Mr Adamopoulos—I support that. I would rather see buildings in the parliamentary triangle demolished to pretty the place up than see a landmark building go up, quite frankly. Things are just getting out of hand in the parliamentary triangle. I work late hours. I have a career in the Public Service. I am here to serve a master and if I do not do that I am being unfair to the Australian taxpayer.

Senator HOGG—In your immediate circle of friends, how many people would be in a not dissimilar situation to yours?

Mr Adamopoulos—One hundred per cent of mine.

Mr Richards—I would say 50 to 60 per cent of mine.

Senator HOGG—So we are not talking about the exceptions; we are really talking about the rules.

Mr Richards—It is a quite normal pattern.

Mr Adamopoulos—Absolutely. My circle of friends are senior officers, as I am. We are here as public servants to serve the public and the government, so we do work late and we do not expect to have to pull up at a boom gate and pay \$7 or whatever it is going to be.

Senator HOGG—You do not get provided with a parking spot now, do you?

Mr Adamopoulos—No.

Senator HOGG—So you are in the scrum down there fighting for a car park every time? Part of your motivation in leaving early for work would be to ensure that you are not parked up the end of some gum tree or on some native bush. We saw cars in all sorts of weird spots.

Ms ELLIS—Defying gravity.

Mr Adamopoulos—That is right. At any time after quarter to nine in the morning, you would have to walk 10 to 15 minutes. I typically park in the Kings Avenue car park, which is near the old foreign affairs building.

Mr Richards—The John Gray Gorton Building

Mr Adamopoulos—That is where I park. If you do not get there by half past eight, you just do not get a park.

Senator HOGG—The introduction of a payment scheme is purely punitive, in my view. It is not going to resolve the problem; the problem will still be there. Given that there is a problem, what do you see as the interim solution? Even if someone comes up with a total solution today, the implementation of that will take some time. Obviously, the difficulty in obtaining parking is increasing. Is there an interim solution? Are there interim measures that need to be considered as part of a long-term solution? Can you give us any idea what this committee might look at recommending?

Mr Richards—One possible solution would simply be to guarantee that the institutions in the parliamentary triangle had a reasonable number of all-day parking spots—as is presently the case, for example, at the National Museum. Museum staff are guaranteed a space. There are a number of bays that are not open to the public until, I think, 10 o'clock in the morning. So when you arrive for work there is a good deal of parking there, and you can park securely, knowing that your car is there for the day. There is a small issue if you have to go out at lunchtime, but life is not perfect; you cannot control everything. I think that would be a viable solution, provided that there were a reasonable number of those parking spots.

Senator HOGG—Are you saying that is an interim solution or a long-term solution?

Mr Richards—I think it is probably an interim solution, because in the long run we have to address these systemic issues.

Senator HOGG—All right.

Mr Adamopoulos—Can I suggest that there is no interim solution, Senator Hogg? I think it is a foregone conclusion. Paid parking is going to be put in by the ACT government on the other side of the Edmund Barton Building. How can you have equity?

Senator HOGG—That is going to exacerbate the problem in the triangle—

Mr Adamopoulos—Precisely.

Senator HOGG—because it is just going to force all the cars over the road.

Mr Adamopoulos—Exactly. Let us get realistic here.

Senator HOGG—War has to be declared.

Mr Adamopoulos—Forget it. It is all over. When you have a submission from a minister of a department saying precisely what I am saying now—that it is all over—and not saying, 'I want my staff to be able to access free parking'—in fact, saying the opposite—I think it is fairly academic. Why are we here now?

Senator HOGG—I think it is a little bit more than academic.

Mr NEVILLE—Quite frankly, I do not concede that at all.

Senator HOGG—No. I think there are a lot of better solutions.

Mr NEVILLE—I think there are solutions. You do not have to bow to the whims of the ACT planners. For example, each department could be allocated a number of spaces in the parliamentary triangle that could be accessed by way of a boom gate and a card.

Mr Adamopoulos—I approached the management of my department and offered to buy, or lease, a vacant spot that was in the building. And I was refused.

Mr NEVILLE—You are anticipating me. I was just about to make that point.

Mr Adamopoulos—That I am not management?

Mr NEVILLE—I have not walked under every building and had a really good look, but as we went round looking at these buildings I got the very distinct impression that there were places there for executive cars but that there were a lot of spaces that were not taken up.

Mr Adamopoulos—Absolutely.

Mr NEVILLE—Nor did I notice any spaces that were specifically marked ‘visitors parking’ or any directions saying where visitors, people who need to go there for half an hour or an hour and then be gone, might go to take them out of the all-day parking areas. I compliment you both on your submissions. The balance between equity and egalitarianism is, I think, really refreshing.

Mr Richards, having spent most of my life as a regional development planner, I was intrigued by your idea of moving government departments out instead of compounding the problem. I think that can certainly happen at the state level. In fact, one of the concerns raised at an inquiry I was on yesterday into regional aviation was that we need to keep adequate air services in the Orange-Bathurst area if we are going to maintain the full suite of a government department out of Sydney in that area. So I am conscious of what you are talking about. But let me ask you this question. Having regard for the fact that the federal bureaucracy has a different modus operandi, especially in respect of advisers, planners and departmental heads needing to be near their ministers, and for the fact that we have a very robust committee system, especially the estimates committee system, what departments could you move out of Canberra without disrupting that modus operandi?

Mr Richards—That was Mr Adamopoulos’s point, so I will pass to him.

Mr Adamopoulos—That was actually in my submission, Mr Neville.

Mr NEVILLE—Sorry.

Mr Adamopoulos—My suggestion was—

Mr NEVILLE—Have you thought about what departments?

Mr Adamopoulos—Only in a casual sense. I think the department of agriculture, for example, might best sit outside of Canberra, a la the New South Wales Department of Agriculture shifting from Liverpool Street in Sydney to Orange, which was very successful.

Ms ELLIS—Is that department currently in the parliamentary zone that we are talking about this morning?

Mr Adamopoulos—The department of agriculture?

Ms ELLIS—Yes.

Mr Adamopoulos—It is in the Edmund Barton Building. It is just on the cusp.

Ms ELLIS—Thanks.

Mr Adamopoulos—Environment Australia could potentially be outside. I am not suggesting country New South Wales or country anywhere.

Mr NEVILLE—In fact, it would be a good leadership role for Environment Australia, would it not?

Mr Adamopoulos—I would have thought so.

Ms ELLIS—To go where?

Mr NEVILLE—When you say ‘outside’—bearing in mind that, of its very nature, the ACT landmass is a fairly small area—do you mean into other states or do you mean into some satellite situation to Canberra within the ACT?

Mr Adamopoulos—Initially I am suggesting Gungahlin, the suburbs where the officers are travelling from.

Mr NEVILLE—That was the original idea of shifting some of them out to Belconnen, but they created their own negative dynamic as well.

Ms ELLIS—How?

Mr NEVILLE—When they were moved out there some years back. I do not know if we are solving the problem that way or if we are just moving it around the ACT.

Mr Adamopoulos—With respect, I think you are moving the jobs to the people as opposed to creating a problem within the parliamentary triangle. You are going to save resources. Look at how we have structured Canberra. We have got two-lane highways going all over the place. There are millions and millions of dollars in infrastructure just to transport people around. It is just amazing. It is a beautiful place, let me tell you, and I love it and I would not live anywhere else, quite frankly, but I think logic needs to prevail here and the necessity for public servants to come to the parliamentary triangle has gone. We should be thinking about telecommuting, family friendly opportunities, getting people off the roads and taking departments to where people actually live—and that has been successful with the ATO.

Mr NEVILLE—I am sympathetic to your view; I just do not think it would work for all departments by their very nature.

Mr Adamopoulos—It may well not, but it would ease up the problem that we have right now.

Mr NEVILLE—We have heard that having facilities in the triangle area would be a way to ameliorate the need for people to have to go out at lunchtime and so on. We have heard of the difficulties at Barton and so on. Assuming that there is even going to be a modest increase in buildings there with pressures on the parking, what would your solution be? What would your vision be for parking in that area? What form should it take?

Mr Richards—I have already suggested that I do think there needs to be some parking reserved for staff who we know are going to be there and who we know are going to be there all day. I think it has to be said that Canberrans do think they have an inalienable right to park right next to wherever they are going—even down to cruising car parks at one end because that is closer to the building and ignoring the empty spaces down the other end. I think we are all familiar with that phenomenon.

Mr NEVILLE—We do that elsewhere too. It is not unique to Canberra.

Ms ELLIS—I do not think we are different to anybody else.

Senator HOGG—It is a nationwide trait.

Mr Richards—It is.

Senator HOGG—There is no need to reflect on Canberrans.

Mr Richards—It is a bit like going to some beaches in Europe where everyone is down by the kiosk even though that is the rocky end and the glorious sand is free down the other end. I think though it would be perfectly legitimate to encourage people to walk, to provide large scale car parking facilities, perhaps multistorey—and I am aware that that would have to be paid for but it could be a modest fee—on the edges and then people could be encouraged to walk. After all, an awful lot of Canberrans at lunchtime walk around the lake—I am one of them—or run around the lake. This could be seen as a healthy thing to do. There are other alternatives like shuttle buses and so on that could be used.

I think the reality is that we are going to need to provide parking. The public transport options are simply too expensive. It may be that that is the answer to the cost of providing pay parking. It is cheaper than providing a bus system that simply cannot pay its way because it is not flexible enough in a city which is not large enough to support it. We are not London. We are not one of the great mass transport systems of the world—we are too small—so we have to find a viable cost benefit answer.

Mr NEVILLE—Thank you, Mr Richards.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you, Mr Richards and Mr Adamopoulos. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information, the secretary will write to you.

[12.11 p.m.]

LYONS, Mr Greg, Vice President, Property Council of Australia

MADEW, Ms Romilly, Executive Director, Property Council of Australia

Mr Lyons—Welcome, Ms Madew and Mr Lyons. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has not yet received a submission from the Property Council of Australia. Do you wish to lodge a submission?

Ms Madew—Yes, I do, and I have a couple of copies here.

CHAIRMAN—Is it the committee's wish to accept the submission? There being no objection, it is so ordered. The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public but, if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee, you may request that hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms Madew—Yes. I thought I would quickly talk about who the Property Council is and who we represent and some of the reasons why we wanted to make a verbal submission. The Property Council of Australia is a pre-eminent representative of the property investment industry, and in Canberra that makes up the investors in office buildings, shopping centres, industrial areas, tourism and infrastructure and also key players in the residential property market.

The basic reason for us making a submission is really about equity between the employment nodes within the ACT. The Property Council supports the principle of paid parking in all employment zones, including Russell. Just to respond to some answers that the last attendees made, I would like to say that I also drive into Civic and park in Civic and I have to drop kids off and I have to pay for parking. So I think there needs to be equity between all employees in the ACT.

The ACT government, if you were not aware, in this week's budget have introduced pay parking in Barton and Forrest office areas and that relates to on-street parking. They have also introduced pay parking in other town centres, such as Tuggeranong, Woden and Belconnen, which will start this year. The Property Council supports this fee as the rate will be the same as Civic's public parking fee and brings Barton into line with Civic and other town centres. I will now pass over to Greg who will quickly go through some of the points we would like to make.

Mr Lyons—It really relates to the equitable argument. Whilst there is no pay parking in the parliamentary zone, we are of the view that it has a competitive advantage over the rest of the ACT from an investment point of view. The Property Council advocates that, over the last 10 years, we have seen Civic as the CBD of Canberra stagnate, whilst areas like Barton and Campbell have grown quite substantially. This has been the result of both ACT and federal

government policy. At the same time, office developments at Barton, Campbell and the airport have been fully supported by the government.

We are concerned about Civic and the fact that there has been a lack of demand and supply for new office space in Civic over the last 10 years. In order to highlight that, we have done some statistics. The actual office space in Civic has fallen by 1.7 per cent over the last 10 years, from January 1993 to January 2003. Whilst the figure has fallen in Civic, the actual office space in Barton has increased by 66 per cent. It has gone from 128,243 square metres up to 213,645 square metres. During that same period, the office space in Campbell has also increased by 36 per cent. So the issue is not having pay parking in the Barton parliamentary precinct—and there is some different terminology here. Parliamentary zone, parliamentary precinct and the parliamentary triangle are all terminologies that are used in our commercial markets, so we just need to make sure that we are talking about the same thing and really looking at all of the areas. But as far as we are concerned, we have a particular interest in the office buildings that are in the parliamentary triangle, the office and commercial development adjacent in the parliamentary precinct of Barton and Forrest and also the area of Russell where we have a very substantial office development in the order of about 100,000 square metres of office space, so it is really an office market in itself that is not dissimilar in size to the town centres of Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Woden.

As we have indicated, there has been a significant increase in the amount of stock, so further development particularly of office space in the parliamentary area would result in a reduction of on-grade car parking space, so vacant sites would be taken up by office buildings. Reductions in existing surface car parking should facilitate demand for structured car parking, and there has been talk for quite a number of years about structured car parking in the Barton parliamentary area. The fee for all long-stay car parking, whether surface or structured, we believe should cover the value of the land, assuming the structural improvements on those lands. So really it should be a commercial rate that reflects the infrastructure that has been provided.

Certainly, we feel that there should be a priority given to tourism and the promotion of tourism in the parliamentary zone. The Property Council in no way wants to see the national monuments unduly affected by whatever policy is implemented. Tourists should be given incentives for visiting in and around the parliamentary zone. Therefore, there should be perhaps a mix of time and lower fees to cater for those particular circumstances so that the tourist market is not unduly affected. Car parking management is an important issue that needs to be considered in your overall investigations, and it should reflect the fact that car parking times should be aligned with particularly the Public Service flex times of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. We would like to see free weekend and public holiday car parking.

In summarising the key points we would like to raise, the other main issue is that consideration should be given to applying the Commonwealth revenue that is raised to repairs, maintenance and improvement of the parliamentary zone infrastructure. We would like to see revenues collected put into the maintenance of the facilities that are created or that already exist. The final point relates to the collection of those revenues. We suggest that the ACT government may be best positioned to administer the collection and the reimbursement of parking fees to the Department of Finance and Administration.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you, Mr Lyons. You mentioned Barton being up 66 per cent and Campbell up 36 per cent and also the 100,000 square metre development. I assume that was an addendum to the 66 per cent—or was that incorporated in the 66 per cent?

Mr Lyons—The 100,000 at Russell is outside of the—

CHAIRMAN—Is that a Russell development?

Mr Lyons—That is basically the Russell Offices complex. That 100,000 is over and above the 213,000 square metres of space currently available in the Barton area. So that is an additional 100,000 square metres of space.

CHAIRMAN—Doesn't that mean there is an oversupply of office space in Canberra generally?

Mr Lyons—No. There is in the order of 1.4 million square metres of office space in Canberra, and the current vacancy rate is six to 6.5 per cent, which represents a very healthy commercial vacancy rate at a national level. As of March 2003, Canberra has the lowest vacancy rate of any capital city in Australia.

CHAIRMAN—What about the empty office space in Civic?

Mr Lyons—That is an issue that we, the Property Council, are very concerned about. There have certainly been a lot of developments constructed and proposed. There is still a lot of land available in areas such as Campbell and Barton and an area is being developed at the airport as well. We are concerned about the long-term viability of Civic as the hub, or the commercial heart, of Canberra, so there need to be incentives provided by the ACT government. We are working with the ACT government on a strategic plan, focusing on those vacant areas and on what we can do to revitalise Civic with alternative uses and greater employment levels.

CHAIRMAN—Let me return to my initial question with respect to Barton, which is up 66 per cent; Russell, which has new and continuing developments; and Campbell, which is up 36 per cent. You did not mention the airport developments, where there is a lot of currently occupied space that has been built in the last two years. That seems to be ongoing and never ending. Isn't that the reason for the oversupply, as far as Civic is concerned, of office space? Otherwise, if there were a curtailment of office space in some areas, surely that would invite potential users of office space to go back to Civic?

Ms Madew—A lot of the developments have been made in Barton and at the airport as a market response. The market is going from the tall, 10-storey towers to longer buildings, which you can get in Barton. Also, the stock in Civic is very old. It is grades D and C, which is the lower end of the stock and, because of government policy, there have been a lot of issues in Civic.

CHAIRMAN—Which government?

Ms Madew—The ACT government. There have been a lot of issues about the revitalisation of Civic and allowing incentives. They did have a policy to revitalise Civic, and a lot of the D-

grade buildings were turned into hotels or apartments, such as the Waldorf. The problem is that a lot of the old buildings do not even have car parks at the bottom of them, and they cannot be converted into residential buildings because part of the planning policy in the ACT is that you need car parks in a residential block.

I understand your question about whether people will go back to Civic if we fill up Barton and the airport. I think the issue for Civic is really that people want better and nicer buildings, like the buildings in Barton and the airport, and that is why they are moving there. Because of current government policy in Civic, they cannot get those buildings there, and that is why tenants are moving into the other office precincts.

Mr Lyons—They are able to secure larger areas. It is basically about the change in office space requirements and user demand, particularly across the public sector, which is dominant in Canberra, but also in the private sector. People require larger floor plates, and they have plenty of on-site car parking in the developments outside the CBD. They are getting that parking at a competitive or zero rate vis-a-vis in Civic, where they would be paying \$6 to \$7 per day for surface car parking or \$2,000 to \$3,000 per annum for car parking spaces underneath commercial buildings.

CHAIRMAN—You have given evidence about increased office space in some of the built-up areas surrounding Civic. Would paid parking in some of the areas you have heard about this morning add to the cost of that office space, and would that be an incentive to return to Civic? As professional people involved with developments, would you agree that Civic is a bit tatty, a bit tired, a bit neglected?

Ms Madew—Keep going.

CHAIRMAN—And it is our national capital, so it should not be like that.

Ms Madew—We certainly do. We are working with the ACT government, and in the recent budget they established an initiative called the central area strategic plan. They have identified, through lobbying by the Property Council, that Civic desperately needs help. That plan is for \$1.4 million over four years to look at what can be done to revitalise Civic, what incentives can be offered, how to green Civic and a whole lot of other, different issues. The government has identified that.

Mr Lyons—To give you an example: someone who parks in the street at the moment pays zero fees. Someone who parks outside for an hour or two may pay \$1 or \$2 per hour to park whilst they go and visit or, if they are there permanently, they pay the rates I quoted earlier. You are only able to obtain about \$1,000 for a basement car parking space in Barton, because people can park outside relatively close to the properties they work in, and there is no great reason to have an undercover parking space. But in Civic that car parking rate, in most A-grade buildings, is \$2,500 to \$3,000 per annum—a two- to three-fold increase in the cost. So, certainly, in our opinion, if paid parking were brought in in the parliamentary areas and, particularly, in adjacent areas such as Barton and Forrest—

CHAIRMAN—And Russell?

Mr Lyons—and Russell, it would bring basement car parking rates up to around \$2,000 per annum, which is more in line with what is available in Civic. It would make them equally competitive, so that there would not be a distinct advantage to go to Barton as against staying in Civic.

CHAIRMAN—I do not want to appear to be verballing you, Mr Lyons, but is the car parking problem the single biggest disincentive with Civic?

Mr Lyons—No. There are other issues outside of that.

CHAIRMAN—You mentioned the older style buildings.

Mr Lyons—I would be happy to go into that in a greater level of detail, but I think the main point we are focusing on here relates to parking. There are a lot of other issues outside of this committee's terms of reference which need to be addressed and which are being addressed, particularly by the ACT government.

CHAIRMAN—I pursued that because, if paid parking became an added cost to office space in the areas we have mentioned—Barton, Russell et cetera—it may, in some small way, redirect office space back to the CBD, notwithstanding that it is not of the same standard or modernity as these developments.

Mr Lyons—Certainly.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I have a quick question. Thank you for your submission and for the specificity in your submission. I want to clarify one thing. You talk about providing incentives for tourism and you have outlined that you are talking about the cost being alleviated by either more time being granted or lesser amounts being charged. Do you rule out entirely the notion of free parking, particularly around the monuments and some of our key institutions?

Mr Lyons—We do not rule it out. What we do not want, if we implement pay parking across the road, is for the people working in those buildings to come and park in those spaces and take them away from the tourists. There needs to be a careful management plan. Certainly, it would be good to provide it for free. It is just that we do not want the office workers taking those spaces.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—I understand that point, but I just wanted to clarify whether or not you support the notion of free parking for tourists.

Mr Lyons—Yes, we do.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA—And, in addition, I have seen in your submission that you clarify public holidays, weekends and outside of the 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. time frame. So thank you for that.

Mr NEVILLE—Mr Lyons, your submission intrigued me. You argued for paid parking in the name of equity. Are you saying to this committee that, because some areas of Canberra have

been effectively stuffed up by poor planning or the lack of ongoing planning, we should penalise the people who work in the parliamentary triangle?

Mr Lyons—It is a good question. No, but you have to look at the facts here in relation to government ownership. The government still own quite a large quantum of the space, particularly the land. They do not own the buildings in the parliamentary triangle per se; they have pretty much sold off the office assets that they had—for example, the Edmund Barton Building and the RG Casey Building have been sold to the private sector. So we have seen a dramatic change in the structure of the ownership in this area, and I am talking about the area from the parliamentary triangle across to Forrest, Canberra Avenue, through and over the Kings Avenue Bridge to Russell. There has certainly been a major change, but at the moment we have two planning instruments that work in the ACT and we just need to make sure that what is resolved is equitable for all parties.

Mr NEVILLE—I am sometimes of the view that more sins are created in the name of equity than might otherwise be the case. There has been a lot of evidence here today that, by the very nature of the parliamentary triangle—given the national institutions that are located on it on the one hand and a number of government departments sensitive to the running of the country on the other—it is never going to have facilities in the way of shopping centres, bill paying facilities, banks, post offices and the like. That being the case, this committee might have a view that the parliamentary triangle does have a unique lifestyle and that it does not want it to become another Civic, Belconnen or something or other, regardless of what the ACT might do in terms of planning and fundraising in Barton. I for one am not so interested in the economic justification of one area versus another; I am interested in the quality of life of the people who work there. I do not find the argument that the diminution of their quality of life because others have had their quality of life diminished over the years to be very appealing at all—whether it is on the equity basis or the quality of life basis.

Mr Lyons—I understand and accept your point. What we have are four government owned office buildings within the parliamentary triangle, strictly speaking—

Mr NEVILLE—But regardless of who owns them, we are not going to allow them to become razzamatazz. They may be owned by private organisations—

Mr Lyons—They are owned by the government and the government is looking for a commercial return on those assets.

Mr NEVILLE—But regardless of who owns them or whether they are corporatised or whether they are owned directly by a department, their function in the parliamentary triangle is not going to change. It is essentially a precinct for the major departments of government and, for that reason, I do not see this argument that it has to be the same as the rest of Canberra. In fact, I see it as a shop window into the national institutions of our country and how the major departments of this country work. I think we should be looking to enhance that, rather than bringing it down to some common denominator just for the sake of so-called equity. You have heard evidence today—if you have been here for awhile—and we have heard evidence that the imposition of parking fees will not necessarily change the problem here. It might alleviate it in the short term. What would your vision be of the provision of additional parking and how it might be paid for in the parliamentary triangle?

Mr Lyons—In the parliamentary triangle, it can be in the form of a structured car park or a boom gate may be applied. I think we are referring really to these four office buildings. I think we have indicated quite strongly that we are not applying it to any public monument or major Commonwealth international asset. Our particular focus is in relation to equity relating to the office buildings within there. So there are two ways—and one of those is to apply a boom gate—and there may be other ways of addressing it. There may be a lesser rate per hour, per day, per month or per year—or there could a park-and-ride scenario where you park outside and bring people in. Most people in Canberra like to be very convenient; as someone suggested earlier, they like to be able to get as close to the building as possible—and that is perhaps a national trend. There has to be no rate, a reduced rate or a full rate that is comparable with other centres. So they are the three options that you have available.

A lot of our members are involved in assets that sit immediately adjacent to the strict parliamentary triangle, and it is in those areas that we want to see some consistency and perhaps make sure that those areas in particular are equitable with the rest of the commercial precincts across Canberra. There is a difficulty of just strictly defining what the parliamentary triangle is, because Russell and Barton sit very adjacent and you have 300,000-odd square metres of office space sitting right on the door step of the parliamentary triangle.

Mr NEVILLE—In your letterhead, you cite some of your major contributors or sponsors. You describe yourself as the pre-eminent representative of property investment in the ACT. Do you have a policy that, when members of your Property Council develop new sites, they have adequate parking for those sites, or do they just do the minimum required by the ACT planning authorities?

Mr Lyons—Correct me if I am wrong, Romilly, but there is no formal policy within our organisation. Our members would be required to follow the requirements. Depending on whether it is ACT land or it is national land, they have to strictly follow the requirements of the National Capital Authority or the parliament.

Mr NEVILLE—They do not have any choice about the minimum requirements?

Mr Lyons—They do not have a choice.

Mr NEVILLE—I just wonder if you as the pre-eminent body have a vision beyond that—where your members provide additional parking which you factor into your rentals?

Ms Madew—I understand the issue. We actually have another issue in the ACT. There is a hole in the ground in Civic which is called the Silverton site. About three years ago, they put a development application through and they had a number of car parks in it. When it went to the commissioner, he actually wanted to reduce the number of car parks for a sustainable transport issue. So the developer wanted to increase the number of car parks, which we would fully support because it is helping the tenants, and he was actually stopped by a government issue.

Mr Lyons—It is case by case. I can quote another example. There is a proposal for the current Hinkler and Knowles buildings at National Circuit in Barton to be demolished and a new building to be created there. The plan was to allocate one space per 100 square metres of gross building area on site and then pay a car parking contribution for another one space per 100

square metres of gross building area. In that case, the organisation I work for—Jones Lang LaSalle—acts for that particular client. They are looking at actually building those two spaces per 100 square metres on site vis-a-vis making a contribution. I think that is leading towards what you are suggesting. But the economics of the cost of constructing those—the return that they can achieve in the car parking rate—does not justify them actually doing that. They are doing that as a long-term vision saying, ‘We believe that car parking charges will be introduced in the parliamentary areas over time. Therefore, we think it is in our best interests and the best interests of our investors’—in that case, the Industry Superannuation Property Trust—‘to get the best return on their investment.’ That would be achieved by actually putting the spaces underground.

Mr NEVILLE—So, assuming they went ahead on that basis and we as a committee recommended that there not be paid parking in the parliamentary triangle—and the powers that be accepted that—they would have to pick up their costs from additional rental. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Lyons—Yes. They would have to compete in the marketplace on a supply and demand basis and make a decision whether to proceed with what is their view at the moment. If that were not to be, they would have to say, ‘We’d prefer to make a contribution to a car parking levy for that additional one space per 100 rather than building it on site.’ I think it is a case-by-case scenario and, again, that sits on the other side of Kings Avenue just outside the strict parliamentary triangle.

Mr NEVILLE—Thank you for that.

Ms Madew—The ACT government have actually introduced an interesting disincentive for building owners to increase car parking spaces. In the recent ACT budget, they introduced a parking levy fee, so for every commercial office space you have, for instance, in Civic, you are to pay \$150 a year. So there is not actually an incentive for owners or developers to increase the number of spaces in their buildings because of such a levy, which further complicates the issues.

Ms ELLIS—I have a number of questions but I may have to brief them down because of time. It seems to me that we have a very vexed question here, and you mentioned some of this in your submission. On the one hand, we have development occurring over a period of time within the parliamentary zone and Barton—but let us just talk about the zone for a second—and, as you correctly say in your submission, further development within and around the zone will result in a reduction of on-grade car parking areas. So we have that happening. At the same time, both planning authorities have requirements for parking on site when you build a building. We could have a debate separately about whether that is adequate or not in terms of car parking and then we could have another debate about who pays for it. We also then have the situation where the ability for people to get in and out of this area on public transport is abysmal, except if you live near a bus stop and you travel within peak period only and you do not go shopping or drop kids off at sport, et cetera.

So what do we actually do? Where do you see the need? How do we actually handle this? On the one hand, it is appropriate for people to wish to build within the zone; but on the other hand, we are removing a very obvious physical need that is there in front of us every time we build a building—and that is the removal of cars—yet we are not seeing a transition to another phase to

replace that, to come in and fix it, to alleviate it. So where does the Property Council see all of this going in general terms? Should we in fact be harsher about requirements for building development? Does it rely only on the ACT government and ACTION buses? Should we put a supermarket in the middle of the zone? Where does it end up? Where do you people see it going?

Ms Madew—There are a whole lot of answers to that. Simon Corbell has mentioned a light rail. I know some people have concerns about it, but maybe that is a great suggestion not only for the Civic people but for the Barton people, because the issues that the Barton people have, we also have in Civic. Because of the way Canberra is spaced, I also have to drive every day. I have to get in my car and drive out of Civic to go and pick the kids up or to go to other meetings. It is actually a phenomenon of Canberra, not just of Barton. Because most of the people working in Canberra are dealing with government and are driving all around the place, it is an issue across Canberra, and we do use vehicles quite highly.

I have a real issue that we would not want to see discrimination of people because we have reduced the number of car parking spaces and we have made it harder for them, especially for women because they need to have availability of parking and they need to be able to get in and out of their cars to do all the household things. So, really, the issue is that we have to solve the issue of car parking and look at sustainable transport and improving the infrastructure within the whole of Canberra, because it is not just this precinct that has an issue; the whole of Canberra has an issue with infrastructure.

Ms ELLIS—The problem for this committee is that we have to have a long-term view but we are also required to have a shorter term view. We have been asked to look at this now, and light rail has been talked about for 40 years—and, with the greatest respect, it will probably be talked about for the next 40 years. In your submission you say:

While there is no paid parking in the Parliamentary Zone it has a competitive advantage over the rest of the ACT.

Are you asking me to believe that the only reason the parliamentary zone has a competitive advantage is because there is no pay parking?

Ms Madew—No, it is one of the competitive advantages.

Ms ELLIS—To be quite frank, I believe that many a developer, department or business would find the parliamentary zone a very attractive address.

Ms Madew—Having no pay parking is one of the competitive advantages. Another relates to the point Paul made—that is, the floor plates, which is the size of the buildings. The floor plates in Barton are a lot bigger than floor plates in Civic. And there are lots of other reasons. That is just one of the reasons.

Ms ELLIS—If I could be provocative, I would suggest then that that is slightly overemphasised in your submission because it immediately draws out from me the comments that I just made. How will the imposition of pay parking in the zone actually make Civic better? How would it develop Civic? You talked about this a little bit earlier, but I want you to be a bit more specific. You put a great deal of emphasis on the fact—and you are correct. We know Civic

has its problems, but I cannot understand that the imposition of pay parking in the parliamentary zone is going to automatically or indirectly make everybody move to Civic.

Mr Lyons—Strictly in the zone, it would be difficult because there is only a limited number of office developments competing with Civic within the strict zone. I suppose our argument goes to the broader issue of the zone and the parliamentary areas adjacent to the zone. I think that is more the issue.

Ms Madew—It is more about stopping departments leaving Civic now or in the next five years because they may see that it is easier for their employees to move to an area where there is no pay parking. We are trying to look at where Civic will be in the next five or 10 years if something is not done. There is nothing stopping departments leaving Civic.

Ms ELLIS—I am very aware of the questions around Civic—but I see that as quite different to what we are looking at here today. Another question that I think is quite pertinent for the Property Council is the location of buildings and departments within the ACT generally. We have incomplete town centres. To what degree do you see your membership as happy to build in Tuggeranong or Gungahlin? At the risk of being self-promoting in the sense that it is my electorate, I will use Tuggeranong as an example. The point is that Tuggeranong is an unfinished town centre. It has never reached the dimensions it ought to have in an employment base. Why do people want to build here and not out there? Am I right in saying that? It seems evident.

Ms Madew—The Property Council's policy is Civic and the town centres. We are very supportive of, for instance, the Woden master plan and the Belconnen master plan, especially the two developments in Belconnen—the ABS development and the DIMIA refurbishment. The previous witness suggested moving federal government departments out of Canberra, but I think he then clarified that.

Ms ELLIS—Yes, he did.

Ms Madew—We are of the opinion that they do not necessarily have to be in Barton or Civic; they can also be in the other town centres. We would support that view. There are so many different issues with Civic—and, again, we could talk about those for hours. We do support the view of a growth in the town centres.

Ms ELLIS—In your submission you recommend:

Consideration should be given to the Commonwealth revenue raised.

that is, should pay parking go ahead—

The Property Council would like to see it applied to repairs, maintenance and improvement of the Parliamentary Zone infrastructure.

A report was done in 1994—I do not know whether many of us were involved in that inquiry—into this very question of pay parking. There were only two recommendations. The second recommendation was:

The National Capital Planning Authority, in consultation with other relevant departments, investigate alternative means by which additional funds could be raised to offset the cost of a restoration and replacement program of national capital assets and maintenance in the triangle.

What has changed since then that we should change our attitude towards that?

Mr Lyons—We are supportive of that.

Ms ELLIS—The committee's recommendation was that they find a way, other than through pay parking, to fund that—and you are saying that we should use the revenue from pay parking. What has changed that would make the committee see a different emphasis today?

Ms Madew—There has been a lot of change around Australia in the last 10 years. Canberra really suffers from being the national capital. Every day you read in the paper, 'Canberra said ...' For tourism and business attraction, we are affected by being the national capital. Any support we can give the NCA in improving the precinct around here that might attract business or be a tourist attraction, we would wholeheartedly support. That is why we are suggesting that any money raised should go to the maintenance of this area for those types of things. It is really for the economic development of Canberra.

Mr Lyons—Otherwise it is just another revenue that goes off into consolidated revenue. We want it redirected into something we can physically see and have maintained.

Ms ELLIS—I understand the point you are making, though I might personally tend to disagree and believe that the maintenance of the triangle should be a base line within the budget regardless of pay parking. We could argue about that.

Mr Lyons—We could assist.

CHAIRMAN—On behalf of the committee, I thank you, Mr Lyons and Ms Madew, for your appearance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information, the secretary will write to you. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence, to which you can make editorial corrections.

Proceedings suspended from 12.51 p.m. to 1.03 p.m.

BYRON, Mr Stephen James, Managing Director, Capital Airport Group

McCANN, Mr Noel Edward, Director of Planning and Environment, Capital Airport Group

CHAIRMAN—Welcome. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence may be a serious matter and could be regarded as contempt of parliament. The committee has received a submission, numbered 30, from the Capital Airport Group. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Byron—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public but if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request.

Mr Byron—We are happy to give our evidence in public.

CHAIRMAN—Before we ask you some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Byron—Yes, thank you. I am also a director of the Canberra Tourism and Events Corporation. As Canberra International Airport we are the owners and managers of what is a major social, tourism and business gateway to our national capital. We support the principle of pay parking in all employment locations, but specifically the introduction of pay parking in the Barton, Parkes and Forrest areas. Put simply, the pressures of development from additional tourism and residential and office activity means that there has been a substantial reduction in on-grade car parking available and this is in fact accelerating. There is a demand for new car parking and it cannot be met by on-grade car parking but rather needs to be addressed with the construction of structures. It is our view that that demand is for both national tourism activities as well as for office workers. We believe that the introduction of pay car parking will deal with the issue of demand at the same time as leading to a funding base to support the construction of this activity.

Finally, I would note that in the National Capital Plan there are quite a number of references that deal with the need to preserve the national capital function of the parliamentary zone and the entire Parkes-Barton area, and in the longer term maintain the scale, dignity and openness of the parliamentary zone. From that point of view, we note that car parking is presently cluttering up the activity and the form of the national capital function that this zone is charged with.

Mr McCann—I would like to add that, anecdotally, it appears that the car parking in the zone and nearby is also being clogged up by people parking and catching the bus to Civic or going to other employment locations. It is not just people in cars coming to work or visiting the area as tourists.

Senator HOGG—What is the evidence for that?

Mr McCann—Partially from the document that is on the web site for this hearing, and partially from people working in the precinct over time. The airport is a major tourism gateway and the access of the zone to tourism and to other people in Australia rather than those coming from within Canberra to work in the zone, and the availability of car parking for those people, is of paramount importance for the growth of the industry as existing and new facilities grow in attraction to the nation. We are not suggesting that pay parking should be seven days a week. We are suggesting it should be in the core hours of the Public Service working time so that on holidays and weekends there is no charge. Therefore, car parking is readily available during the week. We also understand from talking to people at the National Gallery that when the John Gorton Building was occupied by Environment Australia there was a whole new system of parking management required at the gallery to keep the commuters out so it was available to the general public visiting the gallery and the nearby High Court.

CHAIRMAN—Mr McCann, I wonder whether you could set an example by giving free parking at the airport on holidays and weekends.

Mr McCann—That then becomes an issue of how you manage people coming and using the car parking. In Brindabella Park there is no charge on the weekend, and people do use it. At the terminal it is fee for service.

CHAIRMAN—I just thought that would be appropriate, as you are suggesting that it should happen in other areas of Canberra.

Senator HOGG—We would like to see that generosity break out. What was the evidence that you referred to about people parking their cars there and travelling to Civic? Is it the NCA evidence that is on the web site? From my point of view it is unfounded and unreliable at this stage. I will wait until I see something better. I would not pin my hopes on that one.

Mr McCANN—The second part is that people working in the precinct attest to it.

Senator HOGG—Again, we have had no evidence of that.

Mr McCANN—You are right, we have not done a study. It would be extremely useful.

Senator HOGG—I was interested in your evidence, not the repetition of someone else's. Are you advocating that tourists should be charged to park in the parliamentary triangle to go and see the icons in that area?

Mr Byron—I am comfortable with the idea that there be some paid car parks and the charge might be \$1 for two hours or \$2 for three hours. It would leave the opportunity open for those national attractions that have dedicated car parks to put a boom gate on them and have them as fee for service, but to have the opportunity, as they do in many shopping centres, to issue a chit for free car parking to people visiting the attractions. From a management point of view, if you wanted to ensure that there was enough pay car parking generally and free car parking for the attractions, then that would be a sensible management approach.

Senator HOGG—I hold the view that that area is for all Australians and there should be totally free access. There should be no inhibiting factors or conditions which stop any Australian from going there. This is the national capital. It is their capital and they have every right to go there. The fact that we have a parking problem is a different issue. There should be unfettered rights for Australians to enter that particular zone and go and see those particular national icons. That is my position. Having said that, there is a real difficulty differentiating between the tourists who visit that area and those people who work in the area. I concede that that is a real problem. I cannot see any simple way to make it available, free, easy and without any tests or hoops to jump through. They should be able to park, see what they want to see and then get out of the place. How can we do that once you put some sort of boom gate there and charge people to go there? I do not see how you can make it free and easily accessible to the average tourist.

Mr Byron—At the present time it is not free and easy to all Australians. During the week it is inaccessible to national and international tourists because the national attraction car parks are significantly filled by office workers.

Senator HOGG—What is the evidence for that and what happens with the parking attendants who seem to roam around that area and book those cars that overstay their visit?

Mr Byron—The evidence is that I am a member of the Canberra community, I live relatively nearby to these areas, I work in these areas, I go to meetings in these office buildings and I visit the national attractions for functions at lunch time and the like. One does not get a parking ticket and it is very difficult to get a car park. In parts of Barton and Forrest, other than the parliamentary triangle, it is difficult to drive in the streets because they are clogged with parked cars.

Senator HOGG—I concede that there is a problem. I am not trying to bury my head in the sand. If there is a problem, what is the solution other than pay car parking? At this stage the view that I have formed does not support any payment for parking in the parliamentary triangle whatsoever. I am not talking about the areas adjacent to it. That is ACT responsibility; what they do with that is their own business.

Mr Byron—I think there needs to be a parking management system. It could be enforced as I have proposed through a boom gate and if you do not visit the attraction—for example, if you are a worker or doing other business—then you pay but if you go to the attraction you get your card stamped and it is free. I do not believe that that sort of car parking is an impediment or barrier to all Australians. An alternative is that a greater number of car parks in the area could be designated as two-hour or three-hour parking zones. With that sort of policing you can keep out the office workers. The final solution, which is an ingredient from a parking management point of view, is that you need to build additional car parks for both the office buildings and the national attractions. In the commercial world we cannot see that that would happen at all without some form of pay car parking in place.

Senator HOGG—The argument has been put to us today, and it is an inviting argument, that maybe some of the car parking development that might need to take place in that area could be paid for by money that might otherwise be put into the development of a light rail system or additional public transport which, at the end of the day, is not going to resolve the problems for workers in that area anyway. For example, if there were a commitment—and I am just plucking

a figure out of the air—that \$25 million was going to be put into building up public transport in that area, it may well be better, rather than sink the \$25 million into that public transport initiative which I presume would go to the ACT government under those circumstances, to build an aesthetically attractive car park—if one can have such a thing—which would meet the parking needs and, nonetheless, cater for the long-term needs in that area. That may well be money better spent than putting in the \$25 million and then still having pay parking, which does not resolve the problem at all in terms of the needs of the people who work in the area.

We have heard that there are some unique problems in the Barton area. There are no service facilities. If you work in Civic, Belconnen, Tuggeranong or one of these other places you have major hubs, banking, health and other facilities available on those sites. If you work in the Barton area you are absolutely remote from any facilities whatsoever. I am not against getting rid of the people who, if it can be shown, use it as a cheap car park and then go across to Civic. I have no problem about those people being excluded. As for those people who work in the area, I cannot say I have seen any evidence to date that warrants pay parking in that area from a position of equity with other people in the workplace.

Mr Byron—I will make two comments. One is in terms of the cost of car parks. It would be my view—and I would defer to Mr McCann if he overrode me—that you need in the order of 1,000 additional car spaces over the next two years to go inside the parliamentary triangle.

Senator HOGG—Are they for tourists or for both?

Mr Byron—About 600 would be for office workers and about 400 for tourists.

Senator HOGG—That is additional to the existing parking facilities?

Mr Byron—Correct. I would also note that on-grade car parks cost in the order of \$2,500 per space, so that would be \$2.5 million.

Mr McCann—That is without any consideration of the value of the land.

Senator HOGG—That is \$2,500 per—

Mr Byron—It is \$2,500 per space. This is construction cost. It ignores the value of land. If you go to a structured car park it would be about \$12,500 per space, so that would be \$12.5 million. If you were to go to a basement car park solution it is about \$20,000 per car space, which is about \$20 million. What has been happening not only in the triangle but in the broader areas of Barton, Parkes and Forrest is that the on-grade parking solution has been the best one—quite simply the most cost effective—and it has allowed the provision of ample car parking up until the last three to five years. We are now in a position where the on-grade car parks are gradually being chewed up with development.

Senator HOGG—In your view, is there an interim solution to the problem there? Let us just say that we agree there is to be pay parking. That is not going to resolve the problems there overnight. It is not going to deter people from driving their cars. It is not going to solve the problem in the immediate future. What interim proposition, whether it be pay parking or no

payment charge at all, do you see could be put in place to resolve the parking problems there? And do not tell me a shuttle bus from the airport!

Mr McCann—I want to understand the question a little better. When you say ‘interim’ do you mean three months or 12 months?

Senator HOGG—There is a problem there now. You have cars parked up the back of trees, over bushes. We saw this on an inspection of the site. As you say, more of the space that was car parking space is now being used up by the construction of buildings and so on. The amount of space that is available is diminishing; the demand is not diminishing. Instituting a payment charge is not necessarily going to take away the demand for parking space. How does one handle the problem in the interim?

Mr McCANN—Pragmatically there can be no solution in three months. The issue is how soon can a car park structure be built, whether it is funded from revenue or off balance sheet or off budget—assuming income from that car parking structure—so that the shortfall in demand is made up in the areas which are generating the car parking demand by commuters.

Senator HOGG—There is no interim solution?

Mr McCann—No. Canberrans like using their cars, and they are rat cunning about how they get around management systems.

Senator HOGG—Even if you put in place a parking charge and even if the bus system were to be absolutely turned on its head and public transport was provided for the lengthy hours that are needed to service that area, you are not going to do that in the space of six or 12 months.

Mr McCann—That is what I am putting back to you: the solution as I would see it is that the demand is still there whether you charge or do not charge. The breakeven point for paying for car parking as against riding in the bus really has to be weighed against what you do between home and work and back again. The issue really is to make building a car park structure viable. And that is the point we seem to be at at the moment: we have gone through the threshold of supply.

Senator HOGG—I understand your point.

Ms ELLIS—Mr Byron, with your hat on as a member of the local tourism board, the Canberra Tourism and Events Corporation, do you have rough figures on the number of nights people stay in Canberra when they come from interstate by car? I am talking about the typical family holiday during school holidays. Do you have a feeling for how long they stay over?

Mr Byron—The average stay is about 2.7 nights and the average spend is \$150 per night per person.

Ms ELLIS—Is that taking everybody into consideration?

Mr Byron—Yes.

Ms ELLIS—My colleague just asked me whether that includes parking fees! The reason I asked that question is that all our obvious concerns are about the need to emphasise availability and accessibility for tourists in the area we are talking about. Let us hypothetically say that a pay parking regime is adopted, perhaps your idea of the reimbursed cost to tourists can happen. Whilst that is a commendable idea, I can immediately think of ways that it would not work. If people come into the zone and they visit the lake foreshore or the flags and do not actually go into a facility, there is a problem. So it is not a ‘solve all’ but it is a contributing policy.

On the basis that that might not be possible, we would have a flat pay regime. The ACT has a view that they are imposing pay parking to push people as much as they can onto public transport. They like to say that that is one of the reasons. I see your ironic smile, and I am not disagreeing with you but that is a publicly stated aim, amongst others.

Mr Byron—Indeed.

Ms ELLIS—On the other hand, we would need to have a regime within the zone that is not too costly—otherwise it would deter tourists, would it not?

Mr Byron—There are two points to make. Firstly, from all of the discussions I have been involved in at CTEC, the value proposition for a tourist for travel and holiday in the national capital is absolutely outstanding. Nowhere else can you get free entry to the quality of national attractions that we have here. In any other city, it would be \$10 a slab. The market we are talking about—people who do come to Canberra—would readily pay that sort of money per attraction and would visit three a day. So, if there is a small \$1 to \$3 parking charge, it will not be a problem for tourists.

We do have a marketing edge in keeping it free. That is fantastic, and we support it, but the critical issue—with regard to whether, for tourists, there is no charge or a charge of \$1 or \$3—is that we have to have a management system that separates the workers from the tourists. At the moment, with it being totally free for everyone, you cannot have an effective management system. But if you do have pay parking, you will manage the provision of car parking for the workers, because that will be able to fund car parking for the office buildings, and you will then have a system that you can properly manage and distinguish between the two users. And it is not difficult to distinguish between the two types of users.

Ms ELLIS—Mr Chairman, we should formally contact CTEC and ask whether they can come up with some suggestions on how to separate them. Mr Byron, there is no doubt that you have come up with a sensible idea today, but it is not a perfect one and there are problems. We would need to get some suggestions from people on how we could legitimately separate the two users; otherwise, the cost problem is the issue. The reasons for putting a cost on the worker do not match those for putting a cost on tourists. Whilst I agree entirely with your comments about our marketability, it could be that people come here because we have a lot to offer—that it is the national capital, with a national ‘everything’ in it. Let us hope that we can keep it free, because it should be free not just for marketing reasons but for other reasons as well.

CHAIRMAN—Mr Byron and Mr McCann, on behalf of the committee I thank you for your appearance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information, the secretary will write to you. On behalf of the committee, I thank you once again.

[1.30 p.m.]

GIBBS, Mr Ross, Director-General, National Archives of Australia

HYSLOP, Ms Gabrielle, Acting Assistant Director-General, Public and Reader Services, National Archives of Australia

CHAIRMAN—Welcome. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. The committee has received submission, numbered 20, from the National Archives of Australia. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Gibbs—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public but, if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee, you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask you some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Gibbs—I would like to begin by saying that I am very new to Canberra. I have been Director-General of the National Archives for three weeks, so I have a very fresh set of eyes to things, which I hope can embellish our submission. Not only am I new but also the National Archives is new to the parliamentary triangle. We have been there barely five years now, in the old East Block—the old Canberra post office. Our mission is to develop our audience. We have doubled our audience since we arrived, and we want to grow it further. We do not want to put anything in place that would stop that from happening. In particular, we are interested in making sure we grow our audience because we see ourselves as part of the experience of Australians visiting Canberra to see what their parliamentary democracy is about. Our new Federation gallery, opened last year, has the Constitution Act and the proclamation—the bill which establishes Australia as a Commonwealth—which are the two key documents that form our democracy in Australia. Every Australian has the right to see those, and we do not want any impediment to that.

Secondly, and contrary to what everyone is saying, we have no parking problem. We have parking next to our site, and we have adequate parking for our visitors. We have not had any difficulty. It may be the case, as is being put by other witnesses, that people working in Civic are parking in the triangle but, if so, they have not discovered us yet. We have no evidence that that is the case.

CHAIRMAN—How many visitors a year do you have?

Mr Gibbs—We have 30,000.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you.

Senator HOGG—Are they non-paying customers?

Mr Gibbs—They are non-paying customers.

Senator HOGG—I understood that. I think we should have it on the record, just in case.

Mr Gibbs—From my brief introduction as an outsider to Canberra and to the parliamentary triangle, the next item that has struck me since I arrived—we have 150 staff park on our site—is the total lack of any business services support. If staff want to go to the doctor or to the chemist—anything at all to survive—they need to drive in their lunch hour or even before or after work. While it is probably not the clinching argument, as an outsider it is something I have never experienced before in working in many places in Australia. It seems a peculiar impediment to staff employed to work in the parliamentary triangle. If there had to be some restriction on parking in the area, we would very much favour a time restriction rather than dollars or boom gates and the other things that would affect the whole amenity and the look of the area. Finally, if pay parking were introduced—and I think this is in the National Capital Authority's own submission—we would very much want to be involved in the discussion on how that were to happen so we could minimise the impact on our visitors. Secondly, we would very much want it to apply just in business hours. We would not want it to affect our evening or weekend visitors. That is our submission.

Ms ELLIS—You have just brought up a very interesting point in your later remarks. Was the organisation involved to any degree in the original proposal by the NCA for pay parking? Were you canvassed by the NCA.

Ms Hyslop—Yes, we were.

Ms ELLIS—Before they put their submission in?

Ms Hyslop—Yes.

Ms ELLIS—To what degree were you involved at that point?

Ms Hyslop—They held a meeting, and they invited the cultural institutions to attend to brief us on what they were proposing.

Ms ELLIS—That is the nub of my question.

Ms Hyslop—We did not agree with their submission that pay parking should be introduced.

Ms ELLIS—So you were not involved as an organisation in the consideration and development of the proposal; you were involved as an organisation in being presented with what they were proposing? I am being semantic.

Ms Hyslop—I know what you are asking. I think I am right—I am 99 per cent sure I am right.

Ms ELLIS—If you find there is anything you need to add, please do so, but for the moment we will take it as you have said. The other comment that you made, Mr Gibbs, about your not

being 'in-roaded' on could have something to do with where you are, because you are further into the crux of the triangle. It is a pity it is a public hearing, because everybody will know now! Maybe we had better keep a watching brief on it. Out of the 150 staff on site, do you have any volunteers?

Mr Gibbs—Yes, we do.

Ms ELLIS—On top of the 150?

Mr Gibbs—They are on top of the 150.

Ms ELLIS—How many are there?

Ms Hyslop—There are about 20 a week.

Ms ELLIS—Of the 150 staff, do any work part-time rather than full-time Public Service hours?

Mr Gibbs—Yes, there are. We recruit contract staff as well.

Ms ELLIS—What is the proportion?

Mr Gibbs—I think our full-time Public Service numbers are about 120.

Ms ELLIS—So there are about 30 part time.

Ms Hyslop—Related to that issue is the fact that, like the other cultural institutions, the National Archives has events in the evenings as well as on the weekends. So, when we talk about the hours that are relevant, both for staff and visitors it is not just nine to five.

Ms ELLIS—You may not be able to answer this, but what proportion of your staff use public transport to get to work?

Ms Hyslop—I do not know the answer to that.

Ms ELLIS—Would you have a rough idea?

Ms Hyslop—I would prefer to get back to you with that information.

Ms ELLIS—It would be useful to have.

Ms Hyslop—We can certainly provide that information.

Mr Gibbs—Given that we have 150 staff working on the site, and the car park is adequate for us, quite obviously a considerable number use public transport.

Ms ELLIS—Or you have a very big park.

Mr Gibbs—Or they walk. I walk.

Senator HOGG—We have been asking everyone how they got to work today.

Mr Gibbs—I walk.

Ms Hyslop—I drove.

Ms ELLIS—Geographically from where, in each case?

Mr Gibbs—From Kingston.

CHAIRMAN—It would be interesting to know, Ms Hyslop, whether you live closer or whether Mr Gibbs lives closer.

Ms Hyslop—I must confess that I live in Yarralumla and I could walk, but it takes about half an hour and there are various reasons why I do not walk.

Ms ELLIS—We are not wishing to embarrass people about that.

Ms Hyslop—I know. I think it is a very good issue. I also care about the environment and about not using too many cars. We should be using public transport. I can catch one bus to our building whereas a lot of people have to take two or even three buses to get to us.

CHAIRMAN—I think it would be better if you plead the fifth amendment, Ms Hyslop!

Ms Hyslop—I do drive the car.

Senator HOGG—So you are saying there are time considerations in terms of public transport?

Ms Hyslop—Yes, definitely.

Senator HOGG—I would presume that, if you happen to work out of hours, the difficulties are compounded?

Ms Hyslop—Absolutely, yes. If you need to do things at lunchtime, it is obviously very difficult.

Mr Gibbs—If I can comment as an out-of-towner again, the public transport in the area is totally inadequate. There is no timeliness to it. You would have to structure your whole work and business around the hours that the buses visit. If it were going to work as an effective alternative, the numbers of buses and the stops would have to increase dramatically.

Senator HOGG—What is the average length of stay of the 30,000 visitors to your site?

Ms Hyslop—We have two main categories of visitors. The researchers are like the National Library researchers. We have a lot in common with the National Library, and we have a lot in common with their submission. We have people who will come for months at a time and stay all day in the reading room. Very often they are postgraduate students who do not come with large salaries. For them, pay parking would be quite an issue I believe. We also have other researchers who come and stay maybe all day or just for an hour or so and use the reading room. The visitors who come to look at the exhibitions might stay for an hour or so or, as has happened in the last few days at the Flinders exhibition. We also have floor talks and events that are associated with their visit and they might come to the event, which takes about an hour. They then might look at the particular exhibition that is on and then visit the rest of the building. That could take up to three hours. We do not have a café, so we do not have people staying for four to five hours, I would estimate.

Senator HOGG—So you do need to cater to a number of different categories of visitors to your site as well as your staff.

Ms Hyslop—Absolutely.

Senator HOGG—As I understand it, there are the researchers who are doing ongoing projects, the researchers who are doing one-off pieces of reading and there are the visitors themselves. I am now a very strong advocate for the area being totally free to visitors, and I can say that I can see a real case for the researchers, and I still think there is a real case for the employees. So those watching do not lose heart at this stage. But it seems to me that, without getting into that last category, which is the difficult category, there would need to be a way to differentiate those people, because they have a real case in their own right. This is the only place where they can access this material.

Ms Hyslop—Absolutely. It cannot be moved around the country; you have to look at the Canberra collection in our reading room in Canberra. You can look at the Sydney collection in the Sydney reading room, but we do not do interlibrary loans and so on. The archival collection is unique, so we do not send it around the country.

Senator HOGG—In terms of the average tourist, such as me, if I were to go there, it might be for an hour or two hours. That is one class. In terms of the other people, they would be like any other volunteer or any other full-time employee. They would need an all-day exemption in effect to cover them. In some instances there would be an ongoing exemption from any payment of parking fees.

Ms Hyslop—Yes.

Senator HOGG—In terms of the staffing, you said there are 150 staff: 120 full time and 30 part time. What percentage are women in your work force—40 per cent, 50 per cent, 60 per cent?

Ms Hyslop—I would say 60 per cent, but again I would like to get back to you with accurate figures.

Senator HOGG—At your particular site.

Ms Hyslop—At the Parkes building. We also have other buildings in Canberra, but we are only talking about the Parkes building.

Mr Gibbs—There would definitely be more female staff at Parkes than there are male staff. We could get the numbers fairly easily if you wanted them.

Senator HOGG—This is a question that has not been raised earlier today, but is there any special leave available to staff who work at the site such that they can deal with family matters and deal with personal matters? I know in some awards and agreements now there is an opportunity to access family leave, albeit very limited. Is there such an arrangement under any of the working conditions that operate in your site?

Ms Hyslop—Certainly. There is not just family leave but also study leave. Staff who are studying in courses that are relevant to their work need to go off to their lectures and come back again. It is also a relevant fact that we have as many staff working at our Mitchell repository as we do in our Parkes building, and there is quite a lot of toing-and-froing. For example, one of the assistant directors-general has staff in both Parkes and Mitchell, and he needs to go to both buildings to meet with his staff. If he arrives in the afternoon and all the car parking spaces have gone, it is awkward. Other staff do the same thing. We like to have exchange between the buildings so that we are not two separate silos.

Senator HOGG—I do not think we have heard that before.

Mr Gibbs—We have another building at Tuggeranong as well.

CHAIRMAN—On behalf of the committee, I thank you Mr Gibbs and Ms Hyslop for your attendance here today. If there are any matters that we need additional information on, the secretary will write to you. On behalf of the committee I thank you again.

[1.46 p.m.]

CRANE, Mr Terry, Acting Assistant Secretary, Corporate Support Branch, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

MITCHELL, Mr David, Chief Information Officer, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

PAHL, Mr William, Chief Operating Officer, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

CHAIR—Welcome. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of the parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. The committee has received submission No. 35 from the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and submission No. 33 from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to these submissions.

Mr Crane—No.

Mr Mitchell—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public but, if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee, you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask you some questions, do any of you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Crane—Yes. This statement supplements the department's submission, which was forwarded to the committee for consideration in accordance with the terms of reference relating to the interests of those employed in the parliamentary zone and adjacent areas. As a significant tenant in the Barton precinct, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which has 350 staff, has a considerable interest in the important issue of parking arrangements in Barton and adjoining areas. Parking in the Barton area is limited, and the quality of the space available in PM&C's immediate vicinity is poor—that is, a vacant paddock known as York Park. The mitigating factor, of course, is that it is free.

Due to the recent building developments, competition for parking in the Barton precinct is increasing rapidly. Further development will only exacerbate this situation. The NCA's stated strategy of encouraging the use of public transport has merit. However, this can only be successful if transport services meet the needs of potential customers. That is currently not the case, particularly as many staff in PM&C work long and irregular hours. For example, our department's access records indicate that up to 10 per cent of staff leave the premises after 7 p.m. It is the department's understanding, and it was confirmed in this week's ACT budget, that the ACT government is advancing the introduction of kerbside pay parking in Barton, which will only increase competition for spaces in the Barton area.

The general introduction of pay parking in the precinct cannot be considered in isolation. Free parking currently exists within both Barton and the parliamentary zone, which are only a short walk from each other. The limiting of car parking in Barton and/or the imposition of a fee will most likely result in staff choosing to park in the parliamentary zone, thereby competing for spaces at national institutions. Likewise, if pay parking were introduced in isolation in the parliamentary zone, staff employed in that area would simply compete for the very limited free parking spaces available in Barton. It would therefore be difficult, if not impossible, to successfully introduce pay parking in Barton or the parliamentary zone without extending the arrangement to the other.

The introduction of pay parking in the parliamentary zone or the Barton area also does not seem to be consistent with existing policy, which has seen such measures restricted to Civic and town sites attached to significant retail and community facilities, such as Woden and, shortly, Tuggeranong and Belconnen. The significant pressure on parking availability in Barton and the parliamentary zone continues to worsen as the areas are further developed. While the NCA has clearly articulated its future parking policies, PM&C considers these are unlikely to be successful unless the parking arrangements in the parliamentary zone and Barton are addressed by integrated policies.

The introduction of pay parking in the parliamentary zone or Barton would of economic necessity require many staff to utilise public transport. Existing public transport arrangements clearly do not meet the needs of many staff in this department. Therefore, a rigorous review of commuter requirements and a significant increase in public transport availability would be required before further consideration could be given to the introduction of pay parking in the parliamentary zone or the Barton precinct.

Mr Pahl—We endorse what Mr Crane has already said. It pretty well applies to our staff in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as well, so I will keep my opening statement brief rather than repeating many of the points that have already been put on the record. Many of our staff have significant concerns about two issues relating to parking. The first one is the cost of pay parking itself, and it will be no surprise to the committee that most staff do not think it is a very good idea and do not support it. The second one is the availability of car parking. Irrespective of whether people are paying for parking, there is a severe lack of availability in this precinct right now. So we see two distinct issues there.

Senator Hogg already observed that there is a lack of services in this area. Our staff have put strenuous arguments to us very recently on that basis. They say you cannot make a comparison between someone paying for parking in Civic and someone paying for parking in Barton, because the services are not there in Barton. When they are talking about services, they are talking about the necessity to actually leave the workplace and go into Civic or Woden to transact banking business, to pay the ACT government for services they provide, to renew their licences and all those sorts of things. As a department, we would endorse that. That leaves people in the difficult situation of, having secured a car park, choosing to either go in at lunchtime, taking the chance that when they get back they may need to park illegally and may get booked, or delay attending to those personal matters until another time.

There is also the issue of the declining number of car spaces in and around the Edmund Barton Building in particular. We have done a bit of work ourselves and, by our estimation, about 460

car spaces have recently been lost to developments in this area. We might be out by 10 per cent or thereabouts, but I think that is fairly close to the number. We also believe there are about 1,150 car spaces in the area we are talking about, which is adjacent to the Edmund Barton Building. In that same area—of the John Gorton Building, the Edmund Barton Building, Tourism House, Robert Garran Offices and so on—we estimate that there are about 4,300 Commonwealth staff working. So you can see that there is hefty competition for the available parking spaces.

The Riverside development—I think that is the correct name of the new development taking place adjacent to the lake foreshore—has also put more pressure on. We now have workers who, in many cases, come in somewhat earlier than their office based counterparts. They are now taking up car parking that was formerly occupied by our staff. Of course, when they depart after constructing the new developments, the occupiers of those new residential areas will bring another pressure to the area.

I would reiterate that, if we do not have some integrated approach to both the parliamentary triangle and adjacent areas with regard to parking policy, all we will see is a migration from one to the other of people seeking free parking. I do not think you can separate the two. This is an area in which the ACT government and the Commonwealth government will need to cooperate to ensure we get an integrated approach.

In finishing, there is one thing I have not heard, although other witnesses may have brought this forward. Many of our workers with child-care responsibilities and similar who need to leave the workplace for short periods and then return, a lot of our part-time workers who come in having dropped children off at school and so on are finding it almost impossible to find a legal parking space to occupy, irrespective of whether they are paying for it or not.

CHAIRMAN—Mr Mitchell, as chief information officer, do you have anything to say?

Mr Mitchell—I might add to Mr Pahl's comments by saying that people who want to conduct business with the department are finding it increasingly difficult to park. Our suppliers, our vendors, the people who conduct business with us on Commonwealth policy matters and so forth are finding it extremely difficult to access reasonable parking in the vicinity.

Mr NEVILLE—Picking up on that last comment, when the committee did a tour of those buildings, although we did not walk into the car park of every building, it was quite obvious that a lot of those buildings had parking for executive members of staff and the rest of the car parks, under the buildings, were empty. In fact, there were no designated visitor car parks, which could quite easily have been incorporated under the buildings. Is that your perception? It varies from building to building, but what is your perception?

Mr Pahl—Mr Mitchell may be able to give you more accurate information than I can about the Edmund Barton Building, but certainly we have dedicated parking for senior executives. We also have parking assigned for people with disabilities and so on and we also have some visitor car parking assigned which is on the building's premises rather than on the street.

Mr Mitchell—I would add that the car parking within the Edmund Barton Building is not owned by the department, it is owned by Stocklands, the owner of the building. We lease car

parking from them, as do other tenants in the Edmund Barton Building. So we do not have total control over the allocation of internal car parking.

Senator HOGG—How many car spaces in that building are allocated to your organisation for senior executives, for those with disabilities or other groups and for visitors—just so that we have a flavour?

Mr Mitchell—I do not have exact numbers for those. I would be guessing.

Senator HOGG—Make a guess now and come back to us with accurate figures later on.

Mr Mitchell—In the vicinity of 120 to 130 are allocated to the department. About 40 would be allocated to senior executives. Internally, we allocate to our business units additional car parking which they can then distribute amongst themselves, based on the specific access requirements of staff.

Senator HOGG—What about your visitors?

Mr Mitchell—I would estimate that we would have maybe a dozen spaces.

Mr Pahl—I would add that our senior executives, in their remuneration packages, are paying for their car parking, too. I will speak on my own behalf here, for example—

Senator HOGG—No, I did not want to touch on that area unless it was—

Mr Pahl—I am just making the observation that there is not free parking for those executives.

Senator HOGG—No, and we were not implying that.

Ms ELLIS—That is not the concern.

Senator HOGG—That is not the concern for us. Is the cost available? Is there any way people would be prepared to let us know the cost, or is that something that would—

Mr Pahl—The cost per—

Senator HOGG—Car park. The amount that people are contributing.

Mr Mitchell—We could find that information and submit it.

Mr Pahl—Yes, we can get that for you.

Senator HOGG—In respect of those 12 car parks that you were saying are for the visitors—I am not familiar with the building itself—are they within the area where your positions are allocated or are they external to the building, so to speak?

Mr Mitchell—No, they are within the building, controlled with a parking management system.

Mr Crane—In relation to Prime Minister and Cabinet, we have 19 basement car parks, utilised by senior executives, which are included in our lease arrangements. We have 42 parking bays at the rear of the building which are assigned for class B label holders which, again, are for senior executives and visiting Commonwealth vehicles. We have six short-term bays which are available for visitors and contractors and we have two car spaces for the disabled.

Senator HOGG—In respect of those six short-term, are they sufficient for your needs or are you finding that the demand is outgrowing what you have got?

Mr Crane—To be honest, they would probably meet our needs if some of the staff members did not park there and then keep an eye out for the ‘bombers’. Of course we have some peak periods where it is not sufficient but, generally, I would say that that meets our requirements.

Senator HOGG—So you are not looking to expand your demand for space?

Mr Crane—No.

Senator HOGG—In terms of both of your organisations, roughly how many staff are on site?

Mr Crane—In the Edmund Barton Building, 1,650.

Senator HOGG—How many of those would be full time and how many part time—just roughly?

Mr Pahl—We would have to get back to you with that.

Senator HOGG—Yes and, also, what percentage are women?

Mr Pahl—Yes. I would add that there are other tenants in the Edmund Barton Building. So, when we talk about 1,650, there is a range of other tenants in the building.

Senator HOGG—Yes, we accept that. We are just looking at your group.

Ms ELLIS—AFFA has 1,650?

Mr Pahl—That is correct.

Senator HOGG—And PM&C?

Mr Crane—PM&C currently has about 350 staff. I do not have the figures on part-time or the number of women, although I do know that the percentage of women is about 58 or 60 per cent. I will get the exact figures and come back to you.

Senator HOGG—It seems to me, from what I have been able to observe and from what we have been told, that women who are part-time have greater difficulty in getting car parks because they start later and, by that time, whatever car parks are there have all been used.

Mr Pahl—That is certainly one category of people that have difficulty.

Senator HOGG—How did you get to work this morning? We have asked everyone this; it is not to embarrass you.

Ms ELLIS—Including ourselves, I might add.

Mr Crane—I have to go directly to the Brumbies match tonight, so I drove.

Senator HOGG—That is a very good reason.

Ms ELLIS—And they are going to win, too.

Senator HOGG—I do not know who they are playing tonight.

Ms ELLIS—They are going to win.

Mr Crane—I generally drive. I live in Tuggeranong and I drive.

Senator HOGG—Public transport would not be a real option for you, would it?

Mr Crane—We have been talking to the NCA over a number of years about parking in Barton. I experimented myself; I generally leave the building after seven o'clock, and I took the bus home. I went to Woden and then I went to Tuggeranong and then I went to Theodore. It took me quite some time.

Senator HOGG—So public transport is not a personal option?

Mr Crane—It is not a personal option if I want to get home before the children go to bed. I think it took me well in excess of an hour to get home.

Mr Pahl—It is the same for me, Senator. I drive every day. With the hours I keep, public transport would add a considerable burden in terms of travel time.

Senator HOGG—That is quite understandable.

Mr Mitchell—I drove this morning. However, in the recent past I have caught the bus. I am fortunate to live in an inner area which is pretty well serviced, and it takes me half an hour. That was up until recently, when my hours changed. They are longer and now, really, I am required to take the car.

Senator HOGG—You have moved further out?

Mr Mitchell—No. In my new job, I have to work longer hours and, frankly, catching a bus after certain hours is not an option.

Ms ELLIS—We have had everybody but a jogger. We have to get a jogger now. We have had walkers and bike riders.

Senator HOGG—You can see that we are just trying to get the general flavour of the real life situations.

Mr Pahl—Certainly our staff are telling us that public transport is an issue in the Barton area. If we move to pay parking, people are saying that they expect the services to improve dramatically. They do not expect to be paying for parking in the precinct without a commensurate improvement in access to public transport.

Senator HOGG—Are the hours of work in your departments affected by the sitting times of parliament or are they reasonably stable?

Mr Crane—My hours are certainly affected by the sitting of parliament, the budget and various other issues.

Mr Pahl—Ours are as well but it is not the entire department that is affected. It does vary depending on what your function is within the department.

Ms ELLIS—I have a quick question for both of you. Mr Crane, I noted, from your comments in your opening statement and just now, that you were in discussion over a period of time with the NCA about the parking situation. Was your department involved in any way in the composition by the NCA of their proposal to bring in pay parking?

Mr Crane—No, we were not. As I said, we have had various discussions, but because it relates to the parliamentary zone—although there will be a flow-on to Barton—I would assume that is why we were not consulted about the contents of the submission. But we have been in regular discussion with the NCA.

Ms ELLIS—What about AFFA?

Mr Pahl—It is the same. We have written to the NCA on a couple of occasions about parking issues on behalf of our staff, but we were not formally consulted about the issue.

Ms ELLIS—You may have heard the witnesses from the National Archives mention that they were invited to a meeting to hear of the proposal for pay parking to be put forward by the NCA. To your knowledge, were either of your departments involved at that point?

Mr Pahl—I do not believe AFFA was.

Mr Crane—No, not to my knowledge. I am not aware of it.

Mr NEVILLE—We assume that, regardless of whether there is pay parking or not, there is going to be increasing pressure for parking in the area. What are your visions for the area, given

that it includes the national institutions and some of the key government administrative departments? What should a car park look like? What form should it take?

Mr Pahl—I will open up there. I cannot see any solution in this area other than the provision of additional parking spaces, and additional parking spaces will almost certainly have to go vertical. That means we will need to have some sort of construction in the precinct that adds to the number of car places available. I cannot see any solution other than a fairly substantial parking station.

CHAIRMAN—Where would you put this structure?

Mr Pahl—I am not a planner; I am a mere bureaucrat.

CHAIRMAN—But you would certainly need a multistorey car park. You must have some idea of where you would put it.

Mr Pahl—There are a couple of options that I am aware of, but I do emphasise that I have no expertise in this sort of thing. At the moment, for example, the car park adjacent to our building is one possibility for conversion.

CHAIRMAN—What street is that on?

Mr Pahl—It is at the corner of Broughton Street and Blackall Street.

Mr NEVILLE—How many cars would it hold at present?

Mr Pahl—It holds 540.

Mr NEVILLE—So if you had a four-level one, it would probably be somewhere around 1,800, allowing for ramps and things?

Mr Pahl—Quite possibly. I could not really say.

Mr Crane—Chairman, in response to your question about locations, my understanding is that there are two sites already identified on York Park.

CHAIRMAN—For stations?

Mr Crane—For multilevel structures. In relation to the number of car parks, our figures indicate that the York Park paddock contains room for about 320 vehicles. The department has also done some work on the area that is gazetted as Windsor Walk, at the rear of the building, which we sealed. That provides for 125 additional car parks. That will not be long term. We are led to believe that eventually the section of Windsor Walk from Kings Avenue to Brisbane Avenue will proceed and therefore we would lose that facility as well.

Mr NEVILLE—When you say you saw some planning on this, where did you see that?

Mr Crane—I thought it was in the National Capital Authority's submission, indicating that there were sites on York Park.

CHAIRMAN—Gentlemen, on behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information the secretary will write to you. While we have a window of opportunity before our next witnesses, I would like to again ask those people who work in the parliamentary zone to contact the committee today or tomorrow, but preferably today, via email. The committee would like to know how you travelled to work this morning. Did you use public transport? If not, why not? Where did you park your vehicle? The email address for the committee is: jscncet@aph.gov.au.

[14.14 p.m.]

BLEWITT, Mr Arthur, Chief General Manager, Old Parliament House

CANNON, Mr Mark, Manager, Secretariat, Old Parliament House

FORDE, Mr Seamus, Chairperson, Old Parliament House Volunteers' Committee, Old Parliament House

PERRYMAN, Mr Mike, Property Manager, Old Parliament House

SAYERS, Mr Andrew, Director, National Portrait Gallery

CHAIRMAN—Welcome. The hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received a submission, No. 31, from Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Blewitt—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public but, if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee, you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Blewitt—Yes.

CHAIRMAN—Please proceed.

Mr Blewitt—Thank you for the opportunity to meet and talk to the committee.

CHAIRMAN—Not at all, you are most welcome.

Mr Blewitt—Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery are among the cultural institutions that will be directly affected by any reforms to the existing arrangements for parking within the parliamentary zone. Both institutions are operated through a single management structure and governance arrangements that form part of the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. Since 1992, Old Parliament House has been a museum of social and political history located in what was from 1927 to 1988 the provisional Parliament House. In addition to its role as a cultural institution, various areas of OPH operate as a function centre, a conference centre, a venue for meetings and conventions, a gift shop and a cafe and restaurant. Some areas of Old Parliament House are also rented out to government bodies as tenants. Perhaps, importantly, because of the refurbishment program that is ongoing in Old Parliament House, a considerable pressure is put on our parking through contractors visiting the site. More recently, the announcement of the redevelopment of the

parliamentary gardens by the National Capital Authority means there will be a further increase in the number of contractors over the next 18 months.

Old Parliament House also houses the main gallery for the National Portrait Gallery, which continues to develop a collection of portraits of subjects who have made a major impact upon Australia, as well as presenting a range of acclaimed exhibitions. A new National Portrait Gallery has also been recently established in Commonwealth Place on the lake shores to offer contemporary portraits in a second venue.

Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery currently attract approximately 170,000 visitors per year. These visitors, in addition to the people who work in the house including volunteers and contractors, add up to quite a significant flow of traffic through and around Old Parliament House each day. This traffic is served only by a very limited number of car parking spaces, almost none of which are specifically dedicated to Old Parliament House or the National Portrait Gallery. Indeed, since making our written submission to the inquiry, we have already lost an additional 35 car spaces because of the development of the rose gardens, and a further 39 spaces will be lost to that activity in the next few weeks. So, in effect, Old Parliament House has something like 160 parking spaces around the house which are accessible to our visitors, staff and other users of the facility.

Senator HOGG—Can I clarify something you have said there. You have lost 35 plus an additional 39. So that is 74 spaces?

Mr Blewitt—That is right. Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery accept that there may be advantages in a properly managed system of paid parking in the ACT, particularly if it is introduced in the Barton zone as it seems to have been. A carefully developed system of parking controls and parking availability that is easily accessible and properly implemented will help continue the zone's expected growth in tourist activity. Indeed, you will note more recently an enormous effort going into promoting the ACT to attract more tourists. Importantly, Old Parliament House and the other institutions have been directly involved in that campaign and it seems to be working.

However, what must be avoided is the introduction of a system of parking controls that is overpriced and inflexible, that discourages tourists from visiting the attractions in the zone and which unfairly disadvantages staff of the cultural institutions together with our volunteers who work, as you would expect, on a voluntary basis and are the lifeblood of some of our exhibitions and presentations. At a time when greater emphasis is being placed on attracting more visitors to the zone and its attractions and to Canberra in general, particular care needs to be taken to ensure that any new system of parking controls does not inadvertently undermine that growth. Most people who come to Old Parliament House arrive by car from interstate or from other galleries and, importantly, we need to have a significant amount of parking available that is easily accessible and cheaply priced—if it is to be priced.

Any new parking regime should also take into account the likely long-term growth and needs of tourist visitation in the area. Existing parking facilities in the zone are likely to become inadequate with the expected growth in tourist visitation over the next few years. Projects such as the redevelopment of the Old Parliament House gardens, for example, are likely to substantially increase visitor traffic. While this will be welcomed, it will place additional

pressure on parking facilities in the vicinity of Old Parliament House. I should note that Old Parliament House's parking pressure also comes in peaks, particularly during school holidays and Easter weekends and, importantly, we have something like 35,000 high school kids per year coming through our education programs, so there is a large requirement also for bus transport.

We feel that the development of any new parking system should also recognise that the private motor vehicle will continue to be the primary means of transportation for both local and interstate visitors to the parliamentary zone for the foreseeable future at least. If changes to current arrangements greatly increase the cost burden or inconvenience the travel for those visitors, many will switch to alternative tourist attractions. There will simply be fewer visitations to Old Parliament House and some of the other institutions in the zone. We welcome any questions.

CHAIRMAN—Are there any further comments?

Mr Blewitt—No.

Senator HOGG—How many staff do you have working on the site?

Mr Blewitt—We have 60 staff on site—20 in the National Portrait Gallery and 40 in Old Parliament House.

Senator HOGG—Are there any volunteers?

Mr Blewitt—We have a force of 140 volunteers, but you could expect that eight or 10 of those are on site at any one time.

Senator HOGG—Is it a reasonable assumption that most of the staff travel to work by car?

Mr Blewitt—Yes.

Senator HOGG—And is there a reason for that?

Mr Blewitt—I think difficulty with access to public transport and people tend to work late because of venue activities after the normal office hours. We often run lunches, conventions and night sittings, for example, that need to have staff there. So I think they are some of the reasons.

Senator HOGG—What percentage of the work force are women?

Mr Blewitt—A majority, but I do not know the number. Certainly a majority would be women.

Senator HOGG—It is over 50 per cent; that is a fair enough assumption. Do you find that the parking around Old Parliament House is encroached upon by the employees of other buildings that might be in the vicinity?

Mr Blewitt—I suppose there are a couple of issues. Once we start the rose development, which the national capital is doing, we will have up to 100 project managers and contractors

working and they tend to start work at seven o'clock in the morning so they get early access to parking. We notice some commuters from elsewhere who park there, but the number is not high at this stage simply because I suppose the pressure is not there yet. It is not uncommon to have people parking there and working in adjacent offices, but it is certainly not a large number of people at this stage.

Senator HOGG—Does the provision for bus parking put a particular strain on your site as opposed to other sites around the parliamentary triangle?

Mr Blewitt—We need bus parking for five or six buses at any peak time, and that is available at the moment so we would want to retain that. That is for visitors to Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery as well as to the Electoral Education Centre, which is attached to Old Parliament House.

Senator HOGG—Do you have any experience with what sort of attention to detail tourists pay to the parking restrictions that might or might not prevail in the area? Are they aware of them, if there are any? Do they ask whether there are any restrictions, or are they just completely oblivious and park regardless?

Mr Blewitt—One of the attractions of Old Parliament House at the moment is that it has something in the order of 52 car spaces that are for three-hour parking; in fact I think there are slightly more than that. That provides tourists with fairly easy access to car parking and therefore makes the venue attractive for them to come to. They are certainly sensitive, and I must ask Mr Perryman to comment. This morning, for example, there was pressure from visitors and there was concern and complaints about access to parking and that they had to go somewhere else or walk too far. Generally, with the current arrangements in normal times, our parking is quite adequate. We are of course concerned about growth in those areas and what might happen if more commuters come there and actually park. I think the basis of that success, if you like, is that we have access to a significant number of medium-term visitor spaces which range from three hours upwards.

Senator HOGG—What are the staff parking facilities like? Are there any facilities for staff?

Mr Blewitt—Not specifically. We do not have any dedicated parking spaces, except I think for three or four.

Mr Cannon—There are four spaces for Commonwealth cars. The remainder of parking is general parking.

Senator HOGG—So where do the staff park?

Mr Blewitt—In that general parking area.

Senator HOGG—Where there is the three-hour restriction?

Mr Blewitt—There are a couple of areas where there are no restrictions. It is full day on either side, on the House of Representatives and Senate sides. At the front of the house, if you

like, there is three-hour parking and that is where most of our visitors park, but of course they encroach on the side wings as overflow or when spill over takes place.

Senator HOGG—What about yourselves? How many of you caught the bus to work this morning?

Mr Blewitt—I drove.

Mr Cannon—I drove, but I am going to the football.

Senator HOGG—You are going to the Brumbies as well.

Mr Cannon—I often commute. I would have to say that there is a small window of opportunity in the mornings and afternoons for commuters where it is reasonable. If you are travelling outside anything like standard office hours, public transport becomes very difficult if you are going any distance.

Mr Perryman—I always drive, primarily because at the end of the day the hours are quite flexible in my particular area and public transport is pretty well impossible.

Mr Sayers—I drove. I live at Gundaroo so I have no option; I have to drive.

Senator HOGG—I think that is a perfectly valid reason and—

Mr NEVILLE—It was not a loaded question.

Senator HOGG—No.

Ms ELLIS—I declared very early on that I drove. I am a local.

Senator HOGG—As I said earlier, we just want to get the flavour of the circumstances that confront people. It is quite legitimate to drive.

Mr Forde—Approximately 10 per cent of our older volunteers do use public transport.

Mr Blewitt—I should say that security has become an issue in recent times too, particularly with staff working late at night. We try very hard to have them park close to the house at least late in the day to make sure that they are properly secure.

CHAIRMAN—Before I defer to Mr Neville, could I ask Mr Blewitt about the vehicles that appear to be illegally parked in front of Old Parliament House. What is your view on those? Is there any limitation on the number of vehicles that you tolerate there? Who can park there, or is there no limitation on the types of people or vehicles which can park there?

Mr Blewitt—There is no limitation on the 52 car spaces we have in front of the building.

CHAIRMAN—No, I am talking about the illegal ones—for example, the buses. There is even habitation—that is, people live on those buses at times. It seems to vary with the weather. When the weather is quite warm, the number seems to increase, and during winter time the number decreases. Who is it limited to? How many vehicles do you tolerate there?

Mr Blewitt—I will ask Mr Perryman to comment.

Mr Perryman—We have no illegal parking in the immediate street parking around Old Parliament House. Across the road on King George Terrace there are occasionally vehicles parked overnight, but not that many.

CHAIRMAN—I am talking about the lawn where the euphemistically titled ‘Aboriginal embassy’ is and the cars that park there. Some of them looked like condemned vehicles and some of them are probably immobilised. Let me ask the question again, Mr Perryman—although I thought you may, as the Chief General Manager of Old Parliament House, Mr Blewitt, be a bit more forthcoming.

Mr Blewitt—The so-called tent embassy comes under the responsibility of the National Capital Authority. They are responsible for removing dilapidated cars and controlling excessive parking. We of course are interested in the site because it impacts on us, but it is the NCA’s responsibility. Indeed, from time to time, they take action to remove cars from that site.

CHAIRMAN—Would you like to see them removed?

Mr Blewitt—When it becomes nuisance value to us, yes that is right.

CHAIRMAN—What about the illegal habitation there? It is not just a matter of parking cars; it is living in old vehicles.

Mr Blewitt—Generally the people on the site do not interfere with our activities. There have been a couple of incidents that you would have all seen in the media, but generally we have cordial relationships with the site. They do not interfere with the operations of Old Parliament House. While that is the case, we are content to let the NCA look after them. But we do have discussions with the NCA when there is any encroachment or indeed any change, for example, in the level of population there.

CHAIRMAN—So if they do not interfere with your running of that area immediately contiguous and adjacent to or surrounding Old Parliament House, you are happy to see those prevailing conditions continue?

Mr Blewitt—It is not under our authority, so I guess—

CHAIRMAN—That is not what I asked. I asked whether you were happy to see it continue.

Ms ELLIS—Mr Chairman, I do not know whether pay parking would fix the situation you are referring to. I think it would be best if you talked about pay parking.

CHAIRMAN—I think it may. That may be one of the first places you should put it. It came in under parking—

Ms ELLIS—Very, very roughly.

CHAIRMAN—So I thought I would just seek your view, and I think you have made your view fairly clear. There is another question I want to ask you with respect to public transport that stops or starts at Old Parliament House. What type of public transport terminates there? If it is at all possible, could you give the committee some idea of the frequency of it, when they stop, how many are buses, the size of the buses—whether they are big, small or medium? I do not expect you to go into the tare weight or anything.

Mr Blewitt—I do not have that answer.

Mr Cannon—We are on the normal routes of a number of the suburban bus services. I think there is also a tourist bus service—the red bus service? That is an open-top tourist bus service that operates around Canberra and it goes past Old Parliament House as one of its sites. I do not know the exact capacity or frequency of those services.

CHAIRMAN—But that is not public transport, is it?

Mr Cannon—The red one is not, no.

Mr Blewitt—It is of a type.

Mr Cannon—With respect to public transport, Old Parliament House is on the route of about half a dozen regular bus services that go past at various times.

CHAIRMAN—At various times through the day or through the 24 hours or 16 hours?

Mr Cannon—The normal period of public transport. From relatively early in the morning until relatively late at night—though it of course varies depending on the time of day.

CHAIRMAN—Is there any opinion as to whether it is adequate, marginally inadequate or significantly inadequate?

Mr Blewitt—Staff have said to us in discussions about this issue that it is inadequate enough normally not to be convenient for them to use because of the variable hours that they work. Certainly most people have said that it is very difficult and inconvenient to use those bus services. Having said that, some people do—as Mr Forde mentioned—but it is a minority.

Mr NEVILLE—Could repeat those figures for the number of employees?

Mr Blewitt—We have about 60 employees plus about eight to 10 volunteers who come each day, in addition to, as I mentioned, contractors and other support—

Mr NEVILLE—Does that include the national gallery?

Mr Blewitt—The National Portrait Gallery, yes.

Mr NEVILLE—It says in our briefing papers that you have 188 car parks. Is that correct?

Mr Perryman—About half an hour ago I did a count of the people in the building at this point in time. I am talking about tenants, caterers and the education staff as well as the Old Parliament House people. At an approximate count, there were at least 113 but probably closer to 120 people in the building today.

Mr NEVILLE—And how many car parks?

Mr Perryman—There are approximately 160 in the immediate vicinity.

Mr NEVILLE—So these figures were obviously compiled before the rose garden went ahead.

Mr Perryman—Yes. I had to go to a meeting in town today and when I came back I was surprised to find that, in the large car park adjacent to East Block—where there are normally quite a few spare parking spaces; it is underutilised—there were only 12 spaces available. I asked our security staff to do a quick count in preparation for this meeting. They advised me that there were in fact 23 spaces on that side of the building at 11.30 this morning.

I suspect this is a direct result of the closure of the 35 spaces adjacent to the rose gardens as well as maybe pressure from other circumstances. There was no visitor parking—short-stay parking—around Old Parliament House available. There were nearly 160—including the rose gardens—on the western side adjacent to West Block and behind the rose gardens. My perception is that when those 39 spaces behind the rose gardens close, it will have a dramatic effect.

We have quite a peak loading today, and I think this may be symptomatic of seasonal changes. It is a nice day and we have lots of visitors. In the wintertime it will be very different. We will have lots of visitor spaces available and probably more people taking cars. There are a lot of people who are very conscious of the security in the area. In the evenings the security guards frequently escort our staff, particularly the female staff, to those car parks at the back of the building near West Block and East Block because there is a perception of danger.

Mr NEVILLE—On just a rough calculation on the figures we were supplied, the ratio of cars to employees is approximately 86 per cent, plus there is an allowance for disabled and Commonwealth registered vehicles that need spaces. Would you agree with that figure of about 85 per cent or 86 per cent?

Mr Blewitt—Yes.

Mr NEVILLE—What about you, Mr Forde: is that your experience? You said that about 10 in 140 would come by public transport?

Mr Forde—About 10 per cent.

Mr NEVILLE—I suppose your situation is a bit different from that of the other people we have spoken to so far because you have that very heavy tourist emphasis. Every year figures are released on how tourists come to certain attractions. I am not sure which tourist agency releases that—it might even be the ABS. How do tourists come to Old Parliament House—by car, plane, bus et cetera?

Mr Blewitt—The majority of visitors come by car—that is, adult visitors.

Mr NEVILLE—Can you quantify that?

Mr Blewitt—About 89 per cent of our 170,000 visitors per year come by car. The rest would usually be school students coming in buses on tours.

Mr NEVILLE—So, to you, to be able to come by car is absolutely essential?

Mr Blewitt—Absolutely critical.

Mr NEVILLE—Do you have a vision—regardless of whether or not it is pay parking—of what form parking should take in the parliamentary triangle?

Mr Blewitt—As we mentioned earlier, at the moment Old Parliament House is fine in terms of the number of car parks versus the throughput of tourists and activity around the place, but it will be impacted on—as we mentioned—by the closure of a couple of car parks and also the developments taking place which will absorb car spaces for the next 12 or 18 months.

We expect that, particularly with the growth in tourism which is being driven—and there was some reflection in April that that has increased significantly—Old Parliament House is going to be crowded out very quickly from having access to enough spaces to allow those people who want to come and visit to do so. Mr Perryman mentioned this morning a particular pressure point when a number of visitors arrived and the car spaces were full and we had some complaints about access. I suspect that it will be as thin as that in the next 12 to 18 months.

As I think we mentioned in our submission, we would suggest that early consideration needs to be given to the construction of a facility—perhaps a vertical facility, as the previous witness mentioned—to accommodate staff and also a growth in tourism. One of the difficulties that Old Parliament House has—and this is where we are slightly isolated—is that we are pretty much planted in the middle of something where there is not much growth potential or space around. So we need to get access to something that is in at least walking distance and which has easy access for tourists. We expect that in the next five years you will need to start thinking about a properly constructed car park.

Senator HOGG—How many people who visit your site would park at your site and then maybe walk to other venues around? Alternatively, how many would park at, say, the High Court and walk to your site?

Mr Blewitt—I think there would be very little of that.

Senator HOGG—So most people will drive to your site and then they will drive down to Questacon?

Mr Blewitt—With the exception of the National Archives, which is a couple hundred metres behind us. I suspect there is some common parking between those two. I suspect visitors coming here to Parliament House would drive to Old Parliament House once they are finished here—but I do not know that specifically. Certainly beyond that, the National Library is quite a hike and the High Court and the National Gallery are quite a distance away.

Senator HOGG—There is no integrated system in the area which would allow people to park centrally and pick up a commuter system which took them to all the various venues in that triangle, is there?

Mr Blewitt—There is no system like that at the moment—although I gather that was tried some time ago between Old Parliament House and Parliament House.

Senator HOGG—Pardon my ignorance, but what was the fate of it?

Mr Cannon—It was a brief trial that we ran for about three months—I think the last three months of 1999—just as an experiment. A shuttle bus operated between here and Old Parliament House. At the end of the three-month trial we discontinued the service because it had quite low levels of usage.

Senator HOGG—So the concept that has just come to my mind now of having a central parking area which services the whole of that area and having the tourists distributed through the various sites by some sort of shuttle or commuter system is not necessarily going to work?

Mr Sayers—Certainly the trial that we ran at the end of 1999 demonstrated that there was no demand. Because visitation to Parliament House is so high, we thought that, with the easy capacity for people to park here and catch a 20-minute loop bus at 20-minute intervals down to Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery, it would attract tourists to use that service. But it was empty most of the time. People were quite happy to park at Parliament House and then drive down to Old Parliament House or elsewhere.

Ms ELLIS—I was out of the room for a couple of minutes and my next question may have been asked. You mentioned in your submission that you have provided a suggested parking regime which incorporates closure of parking areas on either side of the old building; introducing boom gates; vesting control over parking in the area of your facility so that you would be in a position to allocate, charge and compensate staff, volunteers and so on; and a widening of the parking areas on each side of the old building.

If you have not already had a chance to comment on that today, could you comment on it for me? I am interested particularly in the closure of the little one-way roads on each side of the building and the introduction of boom gates. Are they just seed ideas at this stage or have you discussed that with the NCA? To what degree does that hold any status at the moment?

Mr Blewitt—I suppose the issue is that if we had less parking, at least if we had control over it we would have more flexibility. One of the things we had in mind was that, if you did have

pay parking in the zone, you might be able to have a standard voucher that allows you to go from place to place. Secondly, we are quite isolated down there, so the capacity to get extra space is difficult.

Ms ELLIS—I understand.

Mr Blewitt—The other issue is that we have had discussions with the NCA recently, and we have been advised that, whilst they were initially discussing the idea of us having a fairly closed area, they are now planning to have access to the newly developed gardens through each of the side entrances. That means it is going to be difficult, I think, for them to agree to us closing both of those side entrances.

Ms ELLIS—As an organisation, were you involved in the planning and development of the ideas for the gardens?

Mr Blewitt—Yes, but very late.

CHAIRMAN—Gentlemen, I thank you for your attendance here today. If there are any matters on which we need additional information, the secretary will write to you. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you may make editorial corrections.

[14.47 p.m.]

KENNEDY, Dr Brian Patrick, Director, National Gallery of Australia

CHAIRMAN—I welcome you, Dr Kennedy. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received submission No. 29 from the National Gallery of Australia. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Dr Kennedy—No.

CHAIRMAN—The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public, but if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee you may request that the hearing be held in camera, and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask you some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Dr Kennedy—I will make a brief statement. As indicated in our letter to you, the scale of our interest in this matter represents a considerable body of people. However, our institution is focused primarily on giving the public access to the collections of the National Gallery of Australia. Therefore, we put the interests of the public first. That is consistent with it being a major tourism venue for the national capital, and also nationally.

The National Gallery's car parks were originally under its control. The upper car park was transferred, at a certain point, to the National Capital Authority. The underground car park remains under the authority of the National Gallery of Australia. We have had a consistent problem with car parking—significantly during major exhibitions. Over recent years, I have taken the opportunity to write to the National Capital Authority, the ACT Minister for Urban Services and the chief ministers of both governments that have held power in the ACT during my time.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you. That was, indeed, a short opening statement, Dr Kennedy. We will go to questions.

Ms ELLIS—Without being presumptuous, can I congratulate you on gaining your Australian citizenship.

Dr Kennedy—Thank you very much indeed.

Ms ELLIS—It was very nice to see. Would you mind expanding a little bit, for the sake of the record, on the options as you see them, from the gallery's point of view, for how we could begin to solve the problem? Be a little bit inward looking for a minute and say what you would like to see happen to overcome the issues that you just briefly referred to.

Dr Kennedy—In our submission, we largely accepted what we believed was the position being put to us: that the National Capital Authority would wish to introduce pay parking.

However, if it were within our bailiwick, we would primarily be concerned about the fact that there seems to have been an increasing encroachment over recent years by non-visitors to the gallery into the public car parks adjacent to the gallery. That is putting significant pressure upon us so that people are beginning to complain in increasing numbers, through our visitor feedback surveys and also letters of complaint, that they cannot actually get a car parking space and that, when they do, there is not adequate warning to them that they may, in fact, get a ticket if they stay longer than three hours.

Ms ELLIS—Do you know where those encroachments are coming from, anecdotally or otherwise?

Dr Kennedy—To a degree it is surmise, but we are a very visual institution and with our eyes we can see that people are walking directly across the road. By half past nine in the morning there are already some 150 cars in the upper car park.

Ms ELLIS—So they are local workers?

Dr Kennedy—Yes. They come from the Department of Finance and Administration and from the Department of the Environment and Heritage, and I have actually written to the secretaries of both departments in times past to convey our hope that consideration be given to our visitors. I do understand that there are some issues with construction works and pressure that may have come to bear that has led to an increase in demand for space. But, anecdotally, our observation would be that, as elsewhere in Canberra, people prefer to take the shortest distance between two points.

Ms ELLIS—What do we do about it?

Dr Kennedy—I think that, if it were in our bailiwick, it is quite clear that all that is really needed is additional car parking to absorb the office commuters. If that were provided directly for them, they would not contaminate the areas available for visitors. The broader issues of greater provision of public transportation services and of staff representation, in the interests of our own colleagues and office workers in the area who would not otherwise be able to get to work reasonably given the lack of transport, are very expensive and big issues which are not really within our control. It is our hope that they can be addressed.

With regard to the proposal, we immediately felt that there should be some distinction made between the demands on visitors to the area and the demands on those who work in the area, whether those demands be introduced by pay parking or otherwise. That could be a remedy. We have proposed a number of possibilities which are, obviously, in the self-interest of the gallery and its constituencies—which include its staff, its 150 volunteers, its contractors and a broad range of people coming for purposes other than our primary purpose, which is to facilitate visitors. We hope to retain the current situation of free parking.

Ms ELLIS—What number of staff do you have on site?

Dr Kennedy—We have 280 staff. On any given day, we would have about 200 people working in the building. On particular days—for example, Tuesday is guide training day; the

guides do a course, and they have to train for a year before they actually give guided tours—we might have another 100.

Ms ELLIS—Is that each Tuesday?

Dr Kennedy—Yes. At different points during the week public services are provided—lectures, concerts and whatever, during the day and otherwise—and there is significant pressure to find a car parking space.

Ms ELLIS—And you said you have 150 volunteers on your books?

Dr Kennedy—We have, indeed, yes.

Ms ELLIS—Obviously they would not all be there at the same time.

Dr Kennedy—No, but on Tuesday we would have the very significant bulk of them.

Ms ELLIS—How many car spaces are provided on-site for staff?

Dr Kennedy—There is not a specific number provided for staff. We encourage our staff to park in the underground car park, which has a boom gate that is lifted at half past nine. The reason we introduced that measure was to stop other office workers in the area from driving straight into the car park and consuming all those underground spaces. Also, tailgating has become a problem. The situation has become so competitive for car parking that, in our recent discussions internally, we have been more concerned than previously. One of our staff members was seriously injured at the junction into the gallery. Her contention would be that the car that knocked her off her bicycle was not visible, because it was obscured by cars parked on the side road between the gallery and the High Court. Parking cars in this area has become more frequent in recent times. This was even mentioned in the newspapers, and we would not dispute it. The situation is indeed quite untenable and obviously that is why the inquiry is taking place.

Ms ELLIS—I have had it said to me anecdotally—not on the record, but off the record—that, in some parts of the zone, it would not be overstating it to say that a new phenomenon referred to as ‘car park rage’ is emerging. I do not wish to overdramatise it, but it was put to me that the competition for space is such that people are parking people in. We have heard from other people that they are almost hanging off trees, but with their cars. If we take that seriously, we have a very serious situation on our hands that is taking on a new dimension. Would you agree with that? I do not know whether you are suffering car park rage yet in the same sense.

Dr Kennedy—I have considered a series of letters—because I respond to them all personally and we usually give away quite a few complementary tickets during exhibitions—and I can well imagine that if the anger revealed in the letters written to me is anything like normal anger it was very much greater at the time of receipt of the problem. Our security staff would attest to the fact that people do indeed get very angry, for different reasons. If somebody from, say, Sydney comes to an exhibition—at our invitation through significant promotion in the news media—and finds that they cannot park anywhere, they will park on a verge even though the signs say, ‘Do not do this.’ They say, ‘I could not park anywhere else.’ People can get very angry. They may well be doing something improper or against the regulations but personally I would be

concerned about the image of the national capital at present, vis-a-vis parking at the National Gallery of Australia.

Mr NEVILLE—With regard to the ground level car park, given what you have said, would it not be worth while pursuing having the NCA return that car park to you and for you to employ some form of controls on it?

Dr Kennedy—That would be our ideal situation. If it had been within my give I certainly would not have given it away in the first place. That is something that is of concern. The spirit of the existing situation, as reflected in our submission to you, is that any receipts that would be generated from that car park should go to making sure that the services for visitors are made better. There are particular issues vis-a-vis the car parks at present. The upper level car park will be significantly affected by the building works to add new visitor facilities to the front of the gallery. Those building works have been funded by government and are due to take place. That will impact significantly, taking up space over the next couple of years. Downstairs there is leakage through the concrete of, let's just call it, 'substances', which are very difficult to get off your windscreen. There are maintenance issues in the car park that have to be addressed, and at night-time it is one of the best skateboarding ramps in Canberra, so we have taken the decision to turn the lights off at 10 o'clock. Also, as a number of other people in the area have said they do, we accompany our staff and visitors to their cars in the lower ground car park at night-time, because we have had undesirable instances there.

Mr NEVILLE—The people from Old Parliament House said that about 90 per cent of their visitors come by car. Is that the experience of the gallery as well?

Dr Kennedy—I cannot put an exact figure on it but I am sure it would easily be of that order, if not greater.

Mr NEVILLE—Given that the national institutions are in that area and given that there are not going to be any fewer government buildings—although one or two submissions called for that—what would your vision be of parking, not just for your own institution but in general? That triangle is really the shopwindow of the nation. Given, too, that you are an expert in aesthetics, what is your vision for parking in the parliamentary triangle?

Dr Kennedy—I am very attached, as many people are, to the aspirations and ideals that Walter Burley Griffin had for the capital. And, while it was already 1912 or 1913 by the time he got around to it and the motor car was at work, he certainly did not design the national capital parliamentary triangle to have the aesthetic imposition of a lot of motor vehicles. I think that was right. My vision for the parliamentary triangle would be to see a lot more people in it and a lot fewer cars. I think, really, the original desire to have significant underground car parking—which I know is extraordinarily expensive—was the appropriate one. It would require a lot of money but, if we are serious about retaining the beauty of this extraordinary national capital, that is the type of investment that is called for. If we can do it at St Mary's Cathedral and elsewhere, we can certainly do it in the national capital of Australia.

Mr NEVILLE—That is my experience from Brisbane, too. Underneath King George Square there is a car park, and in that beautiful area between the Treasury building and the executive

building in Brisbane there is a multistorey car park underground. Would something of that nature conform with your ideas?

Dr Kennedy—It would. I am conscious, however, that we live in different times and there would be security considerations. But there are experts in those sorts of areas who could, hopefully, help us. My preference would certainly be to see them underground rather than to see a lot of buildings that on the outside do not look like car parks but are.

Senator HOGG—I have a couple of questions, firstly a personal one which we asked other people today. How did you get to work today? Did you travel by car or public transport? Are you prepared to share that with us?

Dr Kennedy—Yes. I travelled by car.

Senator HOGG—Is there any specific reason? Why take a car? Why not cycle or walk or take public transport?

CHAIRMAN—This is just for our own statistics, Dr Kennedy. There is no impost.

Senator HOGG—There is no fine attached to it.

Ms ELLIS—We are not embarrassing anybody.

Mr NEVILLE—It is not a loaded question.

Senator HOGG—There is no prize at the end of the day, either.

Dr Kennedy—Don't worry! In the spirit of the question, I love cycling and I do it on a Sunday morning, but I find it quicker to get to work in a car. I think I am the only employee of the gallery to actually pay a parking fee in my contract for my car parking space. Really, practically speaking, if I have to go to meetings anywhere during the day there is no other reasonable way to get around quickly.

Senator HOGG—That is fine. With respect to the idea you have about putting the car parking underground, I raised an idea before with the people from Old Parliament House about some sort of commuter service to link the various major sites in the triangle. I am not at this stage considering anything to do with office space or departmental offices. I am thinking more of the likes of Questacon, the High Court, the National Archives, your site and so on. Whilst it might, again, be fairly expensive, would it be reasonable to proffer the idea that there be a central car park hub underground in that area that was serviced by some form of underground commuter link to all of those sites for ease of access for the tourists? It seems to me that, unless you build comfort into it for the tourists, they will take the least disruptive option for themselves, which is to take their car from your site to another site, and another site and another site. I can say that, because I have done it myself as a tourist here. Am I reaching too far out with that sort of a concept?

Dr Kennedy—I have to confess that it sounds to me a very brilliant inclusion in the range of options and not one that I had considered. I rather thought that if we were going to have

possibilities, it might include looking at central car parks where, it has been mooted, there might be bus or light rail overground transport that would take people around. I thought of the car parks as otherwise being underground and there being some mechanism for getting people around—either by walking or by light rail. It is certainly a possibility to think the other way—rather than create underground car parks, create some more distant car parks and an underground tube that might take us around.

Personally, my view is that this city lends itself very much to being viewed, and I would always prefer the option, if there were a choice, to take the overground transport if it were as easy and as quick as the underground transport. I would hope, therefore, that the type of ideas that have begun to be explored which might take overground transport, whether by light rail or a series of buses—I would prefer a light rail system, because I think it would be very attractive—would be the ones that I would consider. But I am intrigued by the notion and had not considered it.

Senator HOGG—It seems to me that there needs to be some short-term solution to the immediate problems. But really, what I believe the committee is looking at is some form of recommendation that will see a long-term solution. One must consider that a long-term solution may have a fair price attached to it in the immediate short term, but when one puts that over the longer term it really makes it quite a reasonable investment. What is your interim solution for us—your immediate solution?

Dr Kennedy—Practically, we do not see much option other than to create a distinction between those visitors and those office workers, including our own, working in the area. Whether we do that by a voucher system, or some other means by which we recompense our staff and those who have incurred a penalty because they did not understand that there is a difference, having separate car parks—or some way of distinguishing between one and the other—seems to be the only possibility we can think of.

Senator HOGG—But wouldn't you also need to distinguish between your paid work force and your voluntary work force in some way?

Dr Kennedy—Yes, we would indeed. We consider our voluntary work force as employees in every other circumstance other than that they are not paid. So they qualify for other considerations. Certainly, in the context of them not being paid, we would have to look into recompensing them in the same way as our visitors. I think the broader solution that you have put in the long term is welcome. It is splendid to see a parliamentary committee tackling a serious issue for the national capital, and I hope that the long-term solution—and the propagation of the notion that only by considerable investment will this place continue to prosper—is the right one. The National Gallery is planning in its master plan another building on an area—already designated in the parliamentary zone review—that is right in front of our current building. I envisage that it will be completed with the same speed with which we have already had one extension and now will have further work done in the next couple of years. All that within a quarter century of opening to the public. The new building will be on the car park! So it is not that far away that we have to consider these long-term issues.

Senator HOGG—There is one other group that I imagine would come within your province: researchers and students. Some of those researchers and students are itinerants in the sense that

they might be there for a day or two at a time, or it might be over a number of weeks. But I would assume that there are people who have longer research projects which would require them to be there for six or 12 months. Is that another category we need to consider?

Dr Kennedy—It is, and we have identified them as among the stakeholders in our submission. In short, if office workers working in other places were not parking in the upper ground car park at the current time, the National Gallery of Australia would most likely be able to satisfy its needs for all the stakeholders, including visitors.

Senator HOGG—Why was the car park transferred to the NCA?

Dr Kennedy—I have not been able to find paperwork on that, although I have looked. I imagine that an arrangement was made at the time to take on responsibility for the maintenance of it. The rest of the gallery's grounds—in fact, everything other than the footprint of the building itself and the underground car park—is currently the responsibility of the National Capital Authority.

Senator HOGG—So some deal was done years ago. We will ask the NCA about that, to find out. You have no control over who parks in that area? Who does park in the area controlled by the NCA?

Ms ELLIS—Everybody but those who should!

Dr Kennedy—That is the upper ground car park.

Senator HOGG—That is where the tourists park?

Dr Kennedy—Yes, or underground, if they can get a space.

Senator HOGG—There is no reason why it was transferred? We will find that out.

Dr Kennedy—I imagine it was to create a consistency with the rest of the gardens so that all upper ground areas were under the one control.

Senator HOGG—I am not a conspiracy theorist, so I am not looking for one there.

Mr NEVILLE—When you talk about opening the car park at 9.30 in the morning, the obvious thing is to keep office workers from abusing the purpose of the building—I understand that. If you had a system with a three-hour limit, would that satisfy most people who go to look at the gallery? The two institutions that would suffer most from a time limit would be the National Library and the National Gallery. I talked to the chairman and I think to Senator Hogg about this when we first visited the area some months back. If we had a car park arrangement where the maximum was three hours, it makes it very hard for an office worker to slip across and move the car at lunchtime.

Dr Kennedy—We have observed that people are more ingenious than we imagine they might be. It was the gallery itself that asked for the three-hour limit in the upper ground car park. We have very good relations with the parking authorities and they have been very cooperative with

us. However, whether they are office workers or visitors to the gallery, if people stay longer than three hours, they get a ticket. We have observed that the office workers come across in their coffee breaks—it is quite clear. This would make a wonderful TV drama. Others come across at lunchtime. There is no doubt that people move their cars around the car park.

Senator HOGG—In an organised way? I am quite serious. Is it a case of, ‘You and I go out, and I will swap with you and you will swap with me’? Is it that type of arrangement that they have worked?

Dr Kennedy—I have no idea—I do not have to avail of it myself—but I am sure people would think of something. It is quite an issue. We thought that, if we introduced, as you say, a three-hour limit, that might stop it; it has not.

Mr NEVILLE—Do many people stay in the gallery for more than three hours?

Dr Kennedy—It is frustrating, but the people who complain are those who become utterly absorbed in our exhibition. It is the people who love the exhibition most, who get lost in time looking at wonderful pictures, who get a ticket. I really am sympathetic. All I can do is offer them free tickets to another exhibition.

Mr NEVILLE—So you are part-paying the fine for them?

Dr Kennedy—That is what we have had to take as a responsibility, yes.

CHAIRMAN—Dr Kennedy, I have one question to ask you before we finish. On private visits to the National Gallery, I cannot help thinking what a wonderful asset it is of the Australian people. The Australian people own it, and their access to it should be, as near as practicable, unhindered and unimpeded. I think that is largely the case now, and I think all those associated with the National Gallery ought to feel very proud of the effort they put into this wonderful, iconic building and the collection of art in it. I say that most sincerely.

That was not my question, because that is not in question. The question is very mundane compared to what I just said. You mentioned the concrete in the car parks, and this is on the very periphery of the ordinance that the minister gave us to inquire into car parking. You mentioned that water drips around and forms big, ugly nodules of salts. I do not mean sodium chloride, common salt. It is probably calcium or magnesium, and it may have a little bit of sodium chloride with it. That is very off-putting at the National Gallery. Having praised the National Gallery, that is the thing that I felt rather critical of. It is so ugly and it looks as though it is damaging the concrete structure. Some people know about concrete cancer, and it is those salts that often form concrete cancer. Because ice expands, where the concrete is absorbing water during winter it cracks and sometimes cracks off. It can form a very serious, or costly, repair bill. Is anything being done about those nodules of salt on the junctions of the concrete beams?

Dr Kennedy—Yes, something is being done as part of the next phase of the building works. We are working on the exterior of the building to add on new facilities and also to address the issues of the car park and landscaping. It is expensive. It is a very large area, and we have, in the past, been relatively underfunded. At the moment, we are in funds and we are going to provide for that. They are big responsibilities. I thank you for your kind remarks about the gallery. I think

that since we went to free admission in 1998 the whole spirit of the gallery has been directed, as indeed our submission is, to providing, as you have said yourself, the greatest access to the collection that the people already own. It is in that spirit that we hope to see an answer to the current issues of parking.

CHAIRMAN—On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your appearance here today. If there are any matters on which we need additional information, the secretary will write to you. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you may make editorial corrections. I thank you once again.

Dr Kennedy—Thank you for having me here.

[3.18 p.m.]

CHAPMAN, Mr John, Committee Member, Friends of the National Library of Australia

DOUST, Mr Russell, Chairman, Friends of the National Library of Australia

CHAIRMAN—Welcome. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of parliament. The committee has received a submission, submission No. 1, from the Friends of the National Library of Australia. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Doust—No, I think not; I wrote it, after all.

CHAIRMAN—I am sure then that it would not need correcting! I am obliged to ask that, even though I knew that it was irrelevant.

Mr Doust—I would like to say, however, that I had a small afterthought after I made the submission, which is really the question of how parking might be mechanically managed if it were necessary to do so.

CHAIRMAN—Would you care to make that in your opening statement?

Mr Doust—Yes, indeed—and I do have copies of it for the committee.

CHAIRMAN—Somebody in the committee will distribute those. Before we ask you some questions, do you wish to proceed to an opening statement?

Mr Doust—Very briefly. The Friends of the National Library—there are 1,300 of them, or thereabouts—exists primarily, perhaps solely, for the purpose of promoting the interests of the library, bringing the library to the notice of the community at large and engendering community support for it et cetera. The library is, in some respects, not quite like any of the other institutions in the parliamentary triangle, with the exception of the National Archives, in that many people spend long hours in the library in research and similar things. Some of those people are members of the Friends of the National Library, and that is the interest of the Friends of the National Library.

Some of the Friends of the National Library happen to be volunteers who do a great amount of unpaid voluntary work. Mr Chapman, for instance, is one of them and, in due course, you might like to ask him what he does. The Friends of the National Library strongly believe that it is quite crucial that the public accessibility to the library—not only for the Friends of the National Library, but for all users of the library—is not impaired by other situations. You will no doubt ask me in due course about the use of the car parks adjacent to the National Library. When you are ready to ask me those questions I will tell you what I see as part of the problem. Essentially, what we want to say is that it is a great national institution. It is used by a lot of people. Some

come for brief periods. Some come to see exhibitions. Many come to work for long hours on their own pursuits, and I happen to be one of them. I do not think I need to say anything more.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you.

Mr NEVILLE—Before you go ahead, Mr Chairman, I would like to move that the addendum from Mr Doust be taken as a supplementary submission and entered into the record of these proceedings.

CHAIRMAN—There being no objections, it is so ordered. Did you have anything to say, Mr Chapman, before I go to questions?

Mr Chapman—No, I think my chairman has said most of what I want to bring forward.

Ms ELLIS—Mr Chapman, were you part of the volunteer guide process that looked after the Treasures from the World's Great Libraries exhibition?

Mr Chapman—No, I work in a different field; I work in the pictorial section. There are about 50 guides within the library and they are specially trained.

Ms ELLIS—It is probably the exception that I am referring to, but I can imagine that the question of parking and availability of parking and access to the library during that process would have been a very interesting and challenging time, given that everybody became overwhelmed by the response to that exhibition.

Mr Chapman—To me, the library itself was overwhelmed, but not the car park. There is that big overflow area at the back of Questacon, which you can then open up into the area closer to the lake. That was quite full at the time and, although I was going in fairly regularly during that period, I did find room to park.

Ms ELLIS—It was still manageable.

Mr Chapman—It was manageable, but you certainly could not park in what was nominally the library's car park—that was impossible—and it is impossible any day of the week nowadays anyway.

Ms ELLIS—So it has got worse since then?

Mr Chapman—Over the last couple of years it seems to have increased. A couple of years ago occasionally the overflow car park at the back of the science centre would have had one row of parking, then it got to two and now, quite often, it is almost four or five. Sometimes it is almost full. I do not know where the people come from.

Ms ELLIS—Mr Doust, I think you say in the submission that you have in excess of 1,300 members of the Friends. How many of them would be participating in the life of the library in a voluntary capacity?

Mr Doust—I think there are between 50 and 60 volunteers.

Mr Chapman—It is actually 70.

Mr Doust—There are about 70 volunteers and about 50 voluntary guides. They are perhaps like Mr Kennedy's volunteers—particular and special—but there are many other people who use the library for other purposes, some of whom use it for long periods. I happen to often spend a full day in the library on my own particular research. I find that, if I can get to the parking area beside the library's—it is not the library's parking area; it does not belong to the library—by about five to nine, I can park in the unrestricted parking area. If I get there at about 9.10 a.m. it is all gone.

Ms ELLIS—Is that the paved parking?

Mr Doust—Yes.

Ms ELLIS—Can you explain what you were referring to a moment ago when you said that doubtless we will ask you about the car parks opposite? Could you tell us about that?

Mr Doust—It is very apparent that many users of the paved car parking at the side of the library simply get out of their cars and go across the road to the Treasury building. A smaller number of them go across to the other side of the road and get the route 34 bus into town; in other words, they are commuters. Essentially, there are a very large number of people who use that car park beside the library who never go into the library, except perhaps its café at lunchtime.

Senator HOGG—What is the solution to that situation?

Mr Doust—I think there are some possible solutions. One might well be to have controlled access to at least a portion of the car park. My supplementary afterthought submission says I can see a way where you might be able to control that, because almost every user of the library has an electronically readable card that they use for photocopying and for retrieving books from the stacks and things like that. It would seem to me that that card could be programmed to go into some sort of electronic leader to allow a boom gate to go up or down. That may be a way to do it. What I think is not a solution to the problem is the central car park with the bus running around, which may be fine for tourists during the day but you must remember that many library users are there at nine o'clock at night. There are occasions when I have had to park in what is sometimes euphemistically called the dirt car park behind Questacon. At this time of the year at night it is pitch dark and it is rough walking. I have learned to take a small torch with me.

Ms ELLIS—It is paddock parking literally, isn't it?

Mr Doust—Yes.

CHAIRMAN—I have asked the other people this, and I thought you might be interested in giving an opinion. Given that there are going to be more public buildings there, and given that the national institutions will become more popular as a dimension of tourism, what would your vision be for additional car parking? What form do you think it should take?

Mr Doust—It would be nice to think that we could talk about underground parking. As I think Senator Hogg said earlier, that may be a long-term solution albeit a costly one—although I am not quite sure what the situation is with the water table in the lake. Assuming that it could be done, I would think that the most aesthetically pleasing way of dealing with it would be to put the cars underground, where you would not see them and they would not be an eyesore. Failing that, and it is perhaps a shorter-term approach, I think there is a strong case for making an amount of parking available for the legitimate long-term users of the library. Two hours is fine for a lot of people who just want to come and see an exhibition or rush in and look up something or other; two hours is not nearly enough for somebody who needs to spend a whole day working there.

Mr NEVILLE—Could you have some sort of thing—I suppose it would require people to go outside twice unless you were a regular—whereby there was perhaps a two- or three-hour limit, and if you wanted to extend beyond that, you had some disc or some other item that you would put on your dashboard—

Mr Doust—That might be a possibility.

Mr NEVILLE—Or you triggered a boom gate or whatever. What about Mr Chapman, do you agree with those points?

Mr Chapman—I am fully in favour of underground car parking. I lived in Brisbane when they were building the underground car park and it made quite a difference. But then again, cars have increased over the years and it still takes up quite a few spaces out of the city itself, and those have been taken up by other people. But from aesthetics, that is the great advantage I feel. It is underground; no-one can see them. The square itself remains just the same as it was prior to the car park being built except for the improvements made to it.

CHAIRMAN—On behalf of the committee, I thank you very much, Mr Doust and Mr Chapman, for your attendance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information, the secretary will write to you. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you may make editorial corrections.

[3.33 p.m.]

STRANG, Mr Peter McKenzie, Cycling Advocate, Pedal Power Australian Capital Territory Incorporated

TRUEBRIDGE, Mr Paul Leonard, Member, Advocacy Group, Maintenance of Public Facilities Associated with Cycling, Pedal Power Australian Capital Territory Incorporated

CHAIRMAN—On behalf of the committee, welcome. I ask one of my committee colleagues to move that the supplementary submission from Pedal Power ACT Inc. and the accompanying document be incorporated.

Senator HOGG—I so move.

CHAIRMAN—There being no objection, it is so ordered. These hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of parliament itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee has received submission No. 32 from Pedal Power ACT Inc. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Strang—No, there are not, but I would like to expand on our submission if that is possible.

CHAIRMAN—We will give you permission to do that in just a moment. The committee prefers that evidence be taken in public but, if you wish to give confidential evidence to the committee, you may request that the hearings be held in camera and the committee will consider your particular request. Before we ask some questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Strang—Yes, thank you. I will speak to the document that you have been handed today, which as I said is an expansion of our earlier submission. Pedal Power ACT is the leading recreational and commuter cycling organisation within the Australian Capital Territory. As well as organising rides and other events, it is active in lobbying for cycling facilities and the rights of cyclists, and it has over 1,500 members.

We support the introduction of pay parking in the parliamentary zone for the following reasons: to correct an inequity between transport modes; secondly, to reduce traffic congestion and assist traffic planning in the zone; for better utilisation of valuable land in that area; to reduce the negative effects of car use; and to encourage healthier and more sustainable transport options. We also believe that better public transport services and facilities for active transport—that is, cycling and walking—should be provided for commuters and other visitors to the parliamentary zone. Our arguments are based on those issues.

In terms of increasing transport equity, parking is essential, as we know, to activities in the parliamentary zone, but careful pricing and control of the supply of parking is vital to ensure that the space allocated to parking is justified based on the cost. Commuter parking charges should

reflect the full costs of providing these parking facilities. Free parking constitutes a significant subsidy for car drivers, which gives private motor transport an unfair cost advantage compared to public transport.

In Canberra's city centre and town centres, paid parking is the norm or is about to be introduced. Free parking in the parliamentary zone is not consistent with the practice in the rest of Canberra. Funding from parking fees could be used to provide better public and active transport facilities in the parliamentary zone. I refer you to a recent article in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, which you should have a copy of. That article talks about how they were looking at raising funds from car parking to fund public transport and active transport.

In terms of reducing traffic congestion and improving traffic planning, we believe that effective control of parking has a broad impact on transport infrastructure and development. Pay parking can help reduce traffic congestion by reducing the number of cars entering the zone and can assist traffic planning in the area.

Better land use is a major issue. Car parks, as you know, are rather ugly, barren pieces of land and are a very poor use of the valuable land within the parliamentary zone. If pay parking results in a reduction in the number of car park spaces required in the zone, this will allow some valuable land now being used for parking to be used more productively or to be converted into open space, which I am sure you would agree would be much more attractive.

We believe that pay parking can contribute to reducing the negative effects of car use. The costs, which economists refer to as 'externalities' in terms of land allocation, road infrastructure provision, greenhouse emissions, health and so on exceed the costs of the fuel excise. So motorists do not really pay their full share and contribute to these costs. We believe that free parking in central areas of Canberra and other cities is inconsistent with environmentally sustainable transport policies.

We believe in encouraging healthier and more sustainable transport. Environmental and health authorities recognise the importance of public transport and active transport. A key strategy, as part of this program, must be to shift a proportion of commuters from cars—especially single occupant vehicles—to buses, light rail, cycling or walking. We very much applaud the government's aim of increasing sustainability and reducing greenhouse gases by encouraging alternative transport modes through the Australian Greenhouse Office's support for state and territory TravelSmart programs. These are programs whereby individuals are given information about other transport modes, and they have been very successful across Australia. As part of these programs improved facilities and services are required.'

In terms of facilities and services, some people may see that paid parking is a penalty on commuters, but we believe that that can be softened to some extent by providing increased public transport services within the zone and also connecting with other centres for both visitors and workers. This would promote sustainable development through reduced car dependence and reduced greenhouse emissions. Just in terms of TravelSmart, I did not mention that the ACT government is planning to include this area in its TravelSmart program. Information will be given to workers so that they can change their travel behaviour.

The last aspect, the formula that we are proposing, is that encouraging bicycle commuting really depends upon having facilities in terms of safe cycling routes and convenient end of trip facilities. This includes secure bicycle parking, lockers for clothing, helmets and so on, change rooms and showers. We believe that these facilities should be provided in all work places.

To conclude, Pedal Power's policy on parking is that commuter parking charges should reflect the full costs of parking facilities. Parking charges should favour short-term parking so that people can visit the national institutions and go about their normal business. Short-term parking is preferable to long-term parking. All buildings should have adequate bicycle parking, showers, lockers and change rooms for cyclists. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you, Mr Strang. Do you wish to add anything, Mr Truebridge?

Mr Truebridge—No, thank you.

Mr NEVILLE—I share your optimistic view of where greenhouse agenda should go. We have received evidence today of three distinct features, and I would like you to comment on them. The first is that the people who work in that triangle by and large work long hours, because they are in sensitive departments. They frequently work until seven, eight, or even nine o'clock at night when public transport is not available. They have reported firstly that public transport to their home locations can take anything from one hour to an hour and a quarter in each direction, or anything up to 10 or 12 hours a week. Secondly, because of the unique nature of the parliamentary triangle, it does not have shopping centres and commercial premises. The ability for people to pay bills, engage with state and federal government payment facilities, the sorts of things that happen at banks, electricity accounts, et cetera, are not available to them in that area. Thirdly, there needs to be unfettered access to the national institutions. How can you say with confidence that that parking should be at the same value as parking elsewhere in Canberra? Is it really a matter of equity, or do you just want to reduce everyone down to the lowest common denominator?

Mr Strang—With respect, I do not think we are talking about reducing anyone to the lowest common denominator. Perhaps I can go through those three points. We are not saying that there should be no parking; we are saying that the balance should be shifted to short-term parking. Certainly there are some people who work very long hours and, whatever happens, they will drive and there should be some provision for parking. But I think that whoever provided the evidence that all public servants who work in that area work those sorts of hours was, with respect, perhaps a bit disingenuous in suggesting that it was more than a certain percentage. We certainly agree that the public transport should be improved. That is an issue.

To address the first point, there should be some parking certainly, but there should be a cost for that parking. What that cost is, I am not sure, but it should not be free. They should pay for the use of the land and whatever facilities are being supplied, and public transport should be improved. In terms of paying bills, once again I feel that a lot of those people have Internet access and would pay their bills on line. Certainly shopping is an issue, but I cannot see that having to get out to pay your bills at lunchtime would be a major issue. With most institutions you can pay bills online or by telephone. I think the number of people getting out to pay their bills is not going to be high.

Certainly people should have access to the national institutions. I heard a little bit of the evidence from the national library association. For most of those people, short-term parking is probably sufficient, whether it be two, three or four hours. Those people do not need day-long parking. Once again, I think it is reasonable that there is some price attached to that. If the National Gallery does not have an entrance fee but if I drove there and there was a parking fee I would not be upset about that.

Mr NEVILLE—Given the Y-Plan development of Canberra—where we have four major shopping centres and suburbs well separated by bushland, open parkland and developed parkland—and given that there are only 300,000 people here, isn't it a truism that the car is still going to be a very popular form of transport for a long time to come?

Mr Strang—Certainly, that is quite true. I think we are talking about shifting the balance a bit. Most people in Pedal Power are not fanatics. I have a car, and Mr Truebridge has a car, but we are talking about trying to get more people to use public transport, to cycle and to walk. We are not saying that everyone should, and we certainly know that not everyone will, but we are trying to shift the balance. If we just accept that the car is king and do nothing about it, the situation will get worse. The current situation of the Gungahlin Drive extension is because people insist on driving rather than using public transport or other methods, so we are going to lose a beautiful piece of bushland. I think that is a tragedy. Canberra has to set an example for the rest of Australia and work out what it can do to increase public transport usage and other sustainable transport modes. The ACT government is moving towards that, and the TravelSmart program that I mentioned is part of that program. It is basically getting a shift in some people some of the time.

Mr NEVILLE—Should the secure parking for bicycles, the lockers and the showers be at a charge to the cyclist?

Mr Strang—Our view is that they should not. Pedal Power manages some facilities at bus interchanges—sealed bicycle lockers with locks—and people are charged to use those lockers. So, personally, I do not have an in principle opposition to some charge, but it has to be consistent with the facilities that are being made available. I think you also have to look at some of the costs. I referred to the external costs or the externalities. When you are looking at cycle use as opposed to car use, you need to weigh up the full cost and not just the direct cost.

Ms ELLIS—In your opinion, what is the state of play at the moment? What is the level of provision of the sorts of facilities for cyclists to which you have just referred within the buildings in the zone?

Mr Strang—Certainly some buildings are better than others. Quite a few people who cycle work for the Greenhouse Office and Environment Australia, and I think the facilities there are reasonable. There is not a consistent standard. If the committee wished me to, I could get a more detailed response—

Ms ELLIS—I was just interested in what your feeling was about the adequacy of it at the moment.

Mr Strang—I think it is fair to say that it is probably fair to poor rather than good to excellent.

Ms ELLIS—So fairly ordinary?

Mr Strang—Yes.

Ms ELLIS—I was also going to ask the same question that Mr Neville asked—that is, if we are asking drivers to pay for parking, should we ask cyclists to pay for facilities? I do not know; I am just asking the question.

Mr Strang—I do not think that it is unreasonable, as long as the cost is measured, not just by the cost of the facility but also by the externalities. The benefit of getting people out of cars is that you get fewer greenhouse gas emissions, less pollution and so on. In some areas of Canberra that is a bit of an issue.

Ms ELLIS—After giving evidence in here, a couple of the witnesses said to me that if you pulled up at a workplace in the zone at 10 o'clock in the morning and you wanted to pay for a park it would not matter because you cannot find one because of the chaos out there. That is the dilemma that we have—and it is becoming more apparent as the day has gone on. From what we have heard today and from we have read in the submissions, it seems that pay parking itself is not the panacea—in fact, far from it—to solve that problem. What would you see as the most important thing that this committee could recommend? If we were making a recommendation tomorrow, what would be at the top of the list from your point of view, given the scope of our inquiry?

Mr Strang—Certainly a charge is going to be a disincentive for some people, so I would expect that would reduce the demand. We are suggesting that a charge is going to mean that some people will make the decision to use public transport or find some other way of getting to work, or they will come three in a car rather than one in a car. So our recommendation would be that imposing a reasonable charge is the best thing that you can do. It has to be enough that it is an incentive for people to think about changing their behaviour. If you are an SES officer on \$250,000 a year it is not going to make any difference.

Ms ELLIS—You would probably have a car park anyway.

Mr Strang—Exactly. I cannot put a figure on it, but if people have to pay \$3, \$4 or \$5 a day they will probably take that into consideration. I do not think that is inconsistent with parking charges in Civic or the other centres.

Ms ELLIS—But you would agree, I am sure, with what has been said earlier in the day about the need for special treatment for tourists?

Mr Strang—Yes. Providing short-term parking is reasonable, and that probably should be at a lower cost.

Ms ELLIS—Should it be charged?

Mr Strang—I cannot see why not. People have to park to shop, and at other centres. We are generally providing free access, or very cheap access, to the national institutions. I think imposing a small parking charge should not be seen as a large disincentive to visit them. It might just mean that people think twice about whether they will take two cars for the family or one.

Ms ELLIS—I guess the dilemma for us, if we agreed with that, is how we pitch the charge at being not enough of a disincentive to deter the tourist but, at the same time, being high enough charge to deter the worker.

Mr Strang—I am sorry but—

Ms ELLIS—When you work out how to help us do that you can tell us.

Mr Strang—You could have a fairly low charge for, say, one or two hours. For most people, that is enough to visit most of the national institutions. If you want to park all day and you do not want to come out and keep feeding the meter, or whatever, then you have that additional charge.

Ms ELLIS—We might get the National Gallery to trial that for us—don't you think, colleagues?—given that Dr Kennedy has watched people come out of office blocks and move cars. I am being facetious. It is just that the human element in this is interesting.

Mr Truebridge—I have recently had some overseas visitors—from Germany and the Netherlands—and they have been mildly surprised that there are no parking charges in many of these areas. Going by the attitude of those few people—I admit it is only a few—I do not think tourists are going to be too put out by a reasonable charge.

Mr Strang—What you have to be careful about is that if you do not charge at places like the National Gallery you will have public servants parking in those spaces.

Ms ELLIS—I am not talking about exclusions.

Mr Strang—No. I am saying that if the committee chose not to recommend a charge for parking at the national institutions but did impose charges around the offices, you would get a spillage across.

Ms ELLIS—I think it would be either all or nothing.

CHAIRMAN—Mr Truebridge and Mr Strang, on behalf of the committee I thank you for your attendance here today. If there are any matters on which we might need additional information, the secretary will write to you.

Mr Truebridge—I am proceeding overseas on holiday next Friday. Perhaps it can be noted that I will not be available after that date.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you, Mr Truebridge. Before closing, I thank all the witnesses who appeared before the committee. I thank the secretariat and I also thank Hansard for their usual fine effort.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Neville**):

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 3.59 p.m.