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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

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CANBERRA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Thursday, 4 March 2004

Members: Mr Billson (*Chair*), Ms George (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Barresi, Mr John Cobb, Mr Hunt, Mr Jenkins, Mr Kerr, Mr Lindsay, Ms Livermore and Mr McArthur.

Members in attendance: Mr Barresi, Mr Billson, Mr John Cobb, Ms George, Mr Jenkins, Mr Kerr, Ms Livermore and Mr McArthur

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Issues and policies related to the development of sustainable cities to the year 2025, particularly:

- The environmental and social impacts of sprawling urban development;
- The major determinants of urban settlement patterns and desirable patterns of development for the growth of Australian cities;
- A 'blueprint' for ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement, with particular reference to eco-efficiency and equity in the provision of services and infrastructure;
- Measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion; and
- Mechanisms for the Commonwealth to bring about urban development reform and promote ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement.

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Committee met at 11.14 a.m.

CHAIR—Welcome. I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage and our inquiry into sustainable cities 2025. This is the fourth hearing of our inquiry and we have just this morning signed off on submission 176. So we are getting heaps of wisdom coming in and we hope you will add to that today. I call the representatives of the National Capital Authority.

CHALMERS, Mr Bruce, Landscape Architect, National Capital Authority

SCOTT-BOHANNA, Mr Graham, Managing Director, Design, National Capital Authority

WRIGHT, Mr David, Director, National Capital Plan, National Capital Authority

CHAIR—A warm welcome to you. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and therefore warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the parliament. Do you wish to make a brief statement or introductory remarks before we engage in a conversation with you?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—Yes. Cities are, by their nature, complex organisms that are constantly in a state of evolution. Planning is the prime tool to shape the evolution of cities. In the ACT we are fortunate, more fortunate I think than many other cities, to have had a comprehensive plan to guide the city's development. Within the National Capital Plan is the general policy plan that identifies the shape and form of the city. As we set out in a presentation for a recent inquiry into our role:

The general policies of the Plan apply to the whole of the Territory and demonstrate a logical and strategic approach to planning. The Plan acknowledges the distribution of national functions throughout the city and the inter-dependence of the urban and non-urban parts of the Territory. It provides for critical services for both national and local purposes, and safeguards the landscape character and quality of the setting. Because it relates to the whole of the Territory, the Plan also secures the future of the National Capital by safeguarding the status, future use, amenity, infrastructure, quality and setting of the seat of Government for all Australians.

The National Capital Plan not only addresses areas of urban development, it also provides core guidance on the employment policies and distribution of employment within the city; the transportation arrangements, both public and private; the integration of the city with the national capital open space system that distinguishes Canberra from many other cities in Australia; and detailed policies for the central national area, which guides the seat of government. The National Capital Authority is also required by legislation to keep the plan under review and to amend it from time to time. In the 14 years since the plan was introduced there have been 46 amendments proposed for the plan, 34 of which have been approved to date. The plan, by this process, remains relevant through constant review and amendment as required.

The ACT government's Spatial Plan represents the first potential major departure from the general policy plan in the National Capital Plan and, while we have not yet been convinced that the plan as it currently exists is not sustainable, we are working closely with the ACT planning

authority to assess the changes proposed in the Spatial Plan, particularly the changes to the extended location of urban areas and, most particularly, the proposals for urban development in the Molonglo River corridor.

I conclude by reiterating our advice to the ACT government that the authority supports the development of a strategy to manage the future growth of Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory. The strategy will need to be consistent with the National Capital Plan for it to be implemented. The principal issues of concern to the authority, in which we have a particular interest, are the central national area; transport, in particular, the arterial and national road system; employment locations; and the National Capital Open Space System, including any proposals to change the landscape character of the city.

CHAIR—So, in relation to the conversation you are having with the ACT government, the integrated character of the planning tools that you have been using to date are being overrun by urban settlement demands—the population and housing driven imperative that, in your mind, may compromise some of the other goals that you have been trying to achieve?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—I do not believe so. While we acknowledge that any plan is only as good as its currency, the plan, as I said, allows for amendment to it from time to time as required. We are required to undertake that review and amendment. The plan can be amended, and the requirements that the ACT government may see as objectives can usually be accommodated within amendments to the plan. The question that is being asked is whether the proposals embodied in the Spatial Plan are the right solutions. That is the process we are now going through with them.

CHAIR—You have identified some limitations. You mentioned impacts on the landscape character, the dislocation between the domicile part of people's life and their economic, social and educational interests and the like. Are they the key areas where you have some reservations?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—They are not reservations, in a sense; we need to have it demonstrated that those things can be dealt with. They are dealt with in the current structure of the city quite appropriately, and we are anxious to ensure that in the process of changing the nature of the urban areas of the city those characteristics do not change.

CHAIR—So the expansion of the footprint itself is not your sole anxiety—it is what accompanies it in terms of those other imperatives that you try to incorporate.

Mr Scott-Bohanna—The principal concern is the nature of the setting of the city and the character of its national significance.

CHAIR—It sounds like you are trying to avoid what we have already got in Sydney and Melbourne, where humans live a mighty long way from where they work and there is a lot of travel—and I do not know anyone who travels for fun once they are post-pubescent. Those important elements of people's lives are so far apart, it is really damaging the vitality of people in the city and the sustainability of the areas. You are in problem prevention mode, by the sound of things.

Mr Scott-Bohanna—These sorts of issues were anticipated as far back as 1912 when the plan was first devised by Walter Burley Griffin. It was reinforced throughout the period when the National Capital Development Commission was responsible for the development of the city, and we have carried on that tradition of ensuring that we do not fall into the same trap as other places.

CHAIR—It was put to me by one of your radio stations a number of weeks ago that whilst all the physical and land use issues around Canberra are well addressed and very thoughtfully planned, there is a gap in terms of support for people's behaviour. Sure, you have got the bike paths but when you get to work there is nowhere to shower and nowhere to put your bike. Are those behavioural change areas some of the biggest challenges resting in Canberra's lap at the moment?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—Things of that nature are in a sense at a local level. Our building was recently refurbished and now includes things like showers and places to store bikes, so there is an evolution. This is what we have been saying about the plan as well. It is an evolutionary process and I do not think that it is one we are following; in many respects we are leading that process.

CHAIR—So that is a bit of catch-up in terms of the tools that activate your plan in people's lives and you think that that is gradually happening?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—Yes.

Ms GEORGE—In reference to the section of your submission where you talk about your environmental management system review, could you tell us a bit about the processes that underpinned it and some of the major outcomes in terms of environmental impacts that you found?

Mr Chalmers—The status of the EMS at the moment is that in the last few months we have completed it as a system and we are in the process of looking at implementing it. Through the process of engaging consultants to put the EMS in place, we did identify some of what we believe to be our more significant impacts. They related to things like potential impacts, energy management, management of species and endangered communities—we have one or two of those within the city, which is a strange thing for us to have in such an urban environment, and they are fairly important. Water management was also a big issue for us—how we might engage with the territory and Commonwealth agencies in relation to stormwater and water management, and the impacts on Lake Burley Griffin and how that balances up with the social requirements of the lake, the recreational needs.

There have been a number of projects that have arisen out of that review. We would hope that once we have implemented the EMS fully we will be able to continue to report and keep those projects rolling under the annual reporting of ESD, which we have achieved for the last three years under the EPBC Act.

Ms GEORGE—Could you explain to me the boundaries of responsibility between the authority and the ACT government? Is there a geographic delineation that is your province alone?

Mr Wright—There are two aspects. The original enabling legislation for the authority dealt with two principal matters: one was planning and the other was land management. Quite often those two things are confused. In terms of planning, there are three levels of control that are embodied through the National Capital Plan. The first is the general policy plan, which Graham alluded to, which sets out the broad metropolitan structure. It does that in fairly simple terms. There are only four basic land use categories that that covers—that is, urban areas, rural areas, broadacre areas and what we call the national capital open spaces, which in turn is divided into four subcategories.

At the next, more specific level, we are able to define designated areas. There are three of those: the central national area, the inner hills, and the main avenues and approach routes. A fourth one is the diplomatic estates. Designated areas have been identified because of their particular national significance. They contain the special characteristics, if you like, of the national capital. The difference there is that the authority has a land use policy role. It can set detailed conditions of planning design and development and it exercises what is known as a works approval role, which is development control in any other jurisdiction.

There is a third category of influence on the planning side where, for land outside areas that have been designated, the authority also has the capacity to identify what they call areas of special requirement. That is where the territory actually administers the planning provisions but we are able to identify things in the interests of the national capital. With regard to our direct control, it includes Lake Burley Griffin and environs, which is a central national area, the main avenues and approach routes—that is, the road reservations, not necessarily the development on either side—and the diplomatic areas of Yarralumla, West Deakin and O'Malley.

From a land administration point of view, land in Canberra is divided into two categories. It is all Commonwealth land but the Commonwealth reserve control over what is called national land. That is land that is used or intended to be used by the Commonwealth for its own purpose. There is a special category of national land which in shorthand is called 6(g) national land, just because of the reference to the act. That is land that has the special characteristics of the national capital. It is land that the authority administers. Anything that is not declared national land by gazette is, by definition, territory land. The territory administers territory land on behalf of the Commonwealth.

CHAIR—That is very clear, isn't it! We will test you on that later.

Mr KERR—You say that you were contrasting the proposals of the ACT government with the Griffin plan. I noticed in your submission that you said there was a Griffin review. It struck me as a little odd to be contrasting an existing framework with the government proposal at a time when you are reviewing the overall wisdom, policy and appropriateness of the vision under which you operate. It struck me that logically you would try to stream these two things together. Things that strike an outsider as logical cannot always be done. What is the nature of the Griffin Legacy project? How is it impacting? Are we going to have a situation where you make a determination now about compatibility and then the Griffin Legacy project says, 'We are going to change everything all over again'?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—I will try to be as clear as I can but, as you can imagine, we are dealing some complex issues. The Griffin Legacy project—and bear in mind the design of the Canberra

that Griffin produced is the central part of the city—did not include the later developments in the adjoining satellite areas of Woden, Belconnen and so on. There is a lot of theory, information and misinformation about exactly what Griffin's contribution to the city was. Part of the purpose of the Griffin legacy was to review as much of the real documentation that we could lay our hands on and from that describe in modern planning terms those parts of the Griffin planning legacy that are recoverable, those parts that are there that have not yet been materialised and also to dispel the theories about what he was responsible for. His contribution to the city ranges from zero to almost everything that has been built. We wanted to clarify that.

The Spatial Plan deals with the way in which the city will handle growth over the next 30 to 50 years. It acknowledges that that will be in the form of consolidation or intensification of certain areas that already exist as well as the addition of new urban areas. The Griffin Legacy and the Spatial Plan in that sense, particularly in relation to the consolidation and renewal of certain areas of the city, work very closely together and will, in fact, complement each other.

The other aspect of the question relates to the way in which the two organisations—the two planning bodies—in this town relate to each other. The relationship is a very strong one. In the process of reviewing and preparing the Griffin legacy material, the ACT planning authority was represented on the advisory panel that oversaw that process, so it is intimately aware of the content of that. We have also just begun a process of putting together a steering group to manage all of the activities of the ACT planning authority and our activities that overlap, complement or abut each other. That process has begun. I think the general view at the moment is that there is a very high level of integration between their activities and ours.

Mr KERR—I may be misled by the language, but at page 11 of your submission you state:

... it is some thirty years since there has been a major review of the philosophy, principles and policies guiding development of the rest of the Central National Area. To address this matter the Authority in 2002 commenced the 'Griffin Legacy' project.

It appears, at least from that, that you are doing more than identifying an historical assessment of the Griffin legacy. It seems as though there is a major review under contemplation about whether that philosophy, principle and policy framework should be altered. Maybe, if that is not the intent, that is the end of my question. But, if it is the intent, it does seem to me that a lot of things are contingent on that.

Mr Scott-Bohanna—I will respond by way of example. One of the three sides of the national triangle is Constitution Avenue. Constitution Avenue extends from City Hill to the Russell office complex. It is, by any measure, largely undeveloped and is a remarkable opportunity. To put it into scale perspective, it is about the same distance from Circular Quay to Central Railway Station in Sydney, so the length of George Street. It is a significant real estate opportunity. It offers the opportunity for integration with the Spatial Plan in the sense that here are places where you can build a lot of housing and the city will benefit from its being built there. In a sense, it is not hard to do because you do not have a large residential component in many areas along Constitution Avenue. You do not have the complexities of consultation that overlay redevelopment of existing residential areas. I saw that as a good example, where the two plans are meshing incredibly well.

Mr KERR—We may be talking French and English to each other, but—

CHAIR—I understand what you are getting at. I think Duncan is asking whether the Griffin Legacy project, in its reiteration and re-examination of what Griffin was on about, is to shape the review of the plan or whether that project is an input into the plan which might say, ‘This is what we think he was on about but because of XYZ it is no longer relevant.’ I think he is asking whether you are trying to go back to the core of the planning here and maintain a Griffin integrity in what you are doing or whether that is being revisited to articulate it into the other work that is going on, so that you might decide to ditch some of it or beef up other bits of it.

Mr Scott-Bohanna—It effectively does both. It will inform any review we undertake of the plan itself but it will also inform things such as the Spatial Plan. I do not see them being in conflict at all; they are very complementary.

CHAIR—So they nourish each other.

Mr Scott-Bohanna—Absolutely.

Mr Wright—Probably the big difference is the sorts of time frames that we are looking at. We are revisiting Griffin to see what we can salvage that has not been built and what we need to protect that has been built. Some of the initiatives that are coming out—for example, the potential development of Constitution Avenue and also West Basin—would take several decades to implement if they were developed to their full capacity, whereas the focus of the general policy plan is on providing a framework for metropolitan expansion; and those two things need to be integrated. We are sympathetic to the reason for the ACT Spatial Plan. We believe that we have a very sustainable footprint in terms of the urban structure which derives from the Voorhees Y plan, and what we are concerned to do is to make sure that the baby is not thrown out with the bathwater in trying to adapt that.

Mr KERR—It derives from what plan?

Mr Wright—It is commonly referred to as the Voorhees Y plan because of the basic Y configuration of the new towns around the central national area. It was devised between 1964 and 1967 and gained its first expression in *Tomorrow's Canberra*, which was published in 1970. It was designed to sustain long-term growth—almost unrestricted growth—because it was based on principles of adding self-contained modules to that same basic structure.

CHAIR—Jack Nichols's time was it?

Mr Wright—I do not know. But that is 35-40 years ago and things have changed. I think the two most significant things that the ACT Spatial Plan has to come to terms with are the fact that we have self-government—and that government obviously has budgetary interests which are quite different from those pre self-government days—and the role of the Commonwealth, particularly in terms of delivering on major national institutions and, more particularly, office employment and where that is located in Canberra. These present very new challenges. The Y plan projected growth into New South Wales, and that is clearly not in the interests of the ACT government, so we are having to come to terms with that. Our view is that the location of the

next greenfields site is a legitimate question for the ACT government to ask. It has done that through the Spatial Plan, and we are examining the key proposals under that plan with it now.

Mr KERR—In terms of sustainability, one of the critiques I have often heard of Canberra is that the city looks pretty good but when you go to some of the outer suburbs you find that they are unserviced areas equivalent to Green Valley in New South Wales, which we saw—without effective local services, difficulties with transport and difficulties with the social mix. You have got a shadow city that sits outside the main focus of most people's sight.

Mr Wright—I live in the 'shadow land', and I dispute that. I think the notion of sprawl is a bit of a pejorative term and in fact implies uncoordinated development. One of the real strengths of Canberra which the ACT government has still managed to sustain is that nexus between planning and development and the provision of services. While you have heard in recent weeks about the difficulties with the health system, aged care and so on, that is a metropolitan problem; it is not confined to inner or outer areas. In Canberra we have been extremely lucky in the way we have gone about ensuring that services and population settlement match each other. The one area where we have tried valiantly and it has proven very difficult is to get that nexus between residential development and employment locations. Typically, in a new town half the battle for self-containment is lost if you do not get the town centre in before half the population is there. But you end up with a much more diffuse journey to work pattern, so there is an efficiency there.

Only a couple of weeks ago in the *Canberra Times*, a scientist from the CSIRO said the costs of congestion in Canberra, for example, were the lowest of any metropolitan city in Australia, and that is because the employment distribution is such that you do not have that massive concentration on the one centre. I think people value the level of accessibility that they enjoy in the city: for example, their access to the countryside. These things are all products of this urban structure that has been fairly enduring and I would not like to see that unduly threatened. I think if we can maintain the principles that underpinned the Y plan while adapting it to the new demands that the ACT government has obviously got to face then we could end up with the best of both worlds.

Mr BARRESI—In a lot of the submissions we have had the issue of transport has been raised as integral to the planning of the city, and Canberra, and the ACT in general, is growing. I remember coming here as a university student and driving my car through the streets of Tuggeranong when there were no houses or people there—it was just fantastic. The thing is that the transport today is the same as back then. Maybe there are a few extra buses but there has not been any attempt to increase the diversity of public transport. Compare that to a couple of the other cities around the world which have a similar makeup to Canberra. I think Canberra, Washington DC and Brasilia are unique in that they are national capitals and cities as an entity, yet Washington DC and Brasilia have been able to embrace public transport. What is wrong with Canberra? Why can't we do it here?

Mr Wright—I think it is a function of time, to be honest. The examples you quote represent cities of at least one million-plus, and in the case of Washington it is probably closer to four million or five million, if you take Greater Washington. Canberra's population, including Queanbeyan, is still only about 350,000. The majority of the development is relatively low density, although the Spatial Plan is seeking to redress that and change the balance between low, medium and even some high density. The Y plan was very forward-looking in the sense that it

identified a separate right of way for a metropolitan intertown public transport system. The people who use the buses in Canberra have got an absolutely first-class service, most of which can be attributed to the way the transport system has been adapted to the urban structure: you have feeder systems into bus interchanges and then the bus interchanges themselves are linked. So, in theory, any two places in the entire metropolitan area can be linked by three very recognisable bus trips, and the level of integration is extraordinary. But you are right—the technology has not changed, and I do not think it is likely to change until we reach the sort of population threshold where—

Mr BARRESI—I have a problem with that. When looking at the whole issue of sustainable cities we come across cities like Melbourne and Sydney that have very large populations and were perhaps developed under ad hoc systems a hundred years ago and are now trying to patch them up. We have an opportunity here in Canberra to prevent a problem like that from happening. Why wait until there is a population of a million? Why not start now, while you have the land, you have got the reservations. People are living in your Y plan miles away from where the employment is. They seem to be employed in the radius of only a few kilometres around the lake, in most cases. Do it now rather than waiting until you have an explosion in population, if it ever comes. But we also have other cities or towns that are growing in size. We have Queanbeyan and Murrumbateman. We are only a stone's throw away from Goulburn. I know people from Goulburn who also work in Canberra. You have the opportunity to do it now.

Mr Wright—I would like to hear what the ACT government has got to say about that, because, ultimately, they will want the money to pay for it.

Mr BARRESI—They will want more money.

Mr Wright—You made reference to the fact that there is a reservation there, and so it is a question, again, of timing, of when we can afford to change to a new, more attractive system. I think we do have an attractive system, as it stands. The ACT government have just undertaken their sustainable transport strategy work. I have to say, from reading that, the majority of their attention has been directed toward making the system itself more attractive to users. There is one particular proposal, which hit the front page of the *Canberra Times*, about a busway down the median strip of Northbourne Avenue, which presents particular challenges for the authority. That would be a key indicator that the intertown public transport route can become a viable system in its own right. There are other, if you like, shadows of that system where we have got on-road dedicated busways and taxiways. I think the sustainable transport structure is extremely ambitious in looking to shift to a 30 per cent mode split, which is high by any city's standards. It would be a spectacular success if that could be achieved here, where we have got a relatively affluent population, high car ownership and high car usage. To achieve that, they are going to have to introduce some draconian methods to force people onto buses—that is, either eliminate car parking at the destinations or charge a price so high for it that it forces people off. Then you have a different question, about equity.

Mr BARRESI—Can I just leave you with this thought: you would not want to rest on the fact that you have got reservations; future governments have got habits of selling reservations off.

Mr Wright—True. They would have to change the National Capital Plan to compromise that, which is one of the strengths of the system.

Mr JENKINS—I have a group of questions, one of which flows on from the theme that Duncan and Phil have developed. I thought I was in agreement with Phil, but he has gone further in having a jaundiced view of the world than I have. Having lived here in Canberra for three years in the early 1970s and mid 1970s I can remember going out to the Tuggeranong Valley and visiting Kambah as the first suburb. The only thing out there was a few houses that had been thrown up, but the school had already been built—and, coming from the urban fringe of Melbourne, I thought that was pretty spectacular, but I realised even then that that was unsustainable. But my question goes: if we are talking about the land use planning and aesthetics and things like that, but more about social infrastructure, can land use planning lead to a soul and a sense of community? My reflections about the mid-1970s, which flow on from Duncan's comments, were that one of the real problems was that there were single generations of families, and that brought a great difficulty. But that was no different from any other urban area around Australia. Thirty years down the track that will be slightly different, but has always been a problem. We can get the settings right, and the basis of the Y plan is something that we probably all envy, but it is then getting the proper facilities, both physical and social infrastructure.

Mr Wright—I think what you are alluding to there is what I call 'new town syndrome'. If you get rapid development of any area then you are likely to get a congregation of people who are at the stage of their lives where they are preparing to move into their first home and so on, so you do get age-specific problems in terms of social infrastructure. That is something that the NCDC—and, subsequently, the ACT government—have had to grapple with. We are now faced with a relatively ageing community. The problem with that is that your school becomes redundant and the demand changes to different sorts of facilities—and it happens all of a sudden.

Mr KERR—Turn them into nursing homes!

Mr Wright—That is not a bad idea—we might suggest that!

Mr JENKINS—I do not know whose responsibility it is, but when you are up here as a transitory guest of the ACT and its media you get to learn about the local problems and, apparently, one of the local problems is the zoning of land for community use but aged care facilities not being under that umbrella and so on. Do we need to free up our scope when we set down the footprints in the planning so that it is not necessarily education as a public use but a wider public use—or a public use that can change over the life cycle?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—I would like to respond in a couple of ways. Firstly, I think you have touched on one of the differences between planning in Canberra and planning elsewhere—that is, we take responsibility for a very broad definition of what can go where, the detail of which is embodied in the Territory Plan. In a sense, that is a question better asked of the ACT Planning and Land Authority. That is the problem they are grappling with, and I am sure they are aware of it. I guess the other issue is that it is very difficult to imagine how Canberra might be. Washington is twice the age of Canberra, and a hundred years ago its population was about the same as ours. So density and demand on the city changes a great deal. We are a young city and we have not yet begun to really establish that maturity. That is something that will take place, but it is the planning structure in which you allow that to happen that I think gives us the strength that we have now.

Mr JENKINS—I have another question which is unrelated but which goes back to the Griffin legacy, and it is more specific. It has always struck me that for the time when the grand boulevards of the triangle were actually planned they were a great piece of overengineering—here were these grand reserves for roadways and everything—but now, at this point in history, there is an advantage, because we are able to use them. I suppose this was done on the basis that in some of the European models and other models there were these types of grand boulevards. Was there a sense that the vision was there in the early days that they had a use as well as being something that gave that sense of vista and so on?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—I think there was a sense that, particularly, the boulevards that make up the triangle are as much about ceremony and vista as they are about practical use. The one thing they have demonstrated though, I think, is a remarkable resilience. These are the roads that were described by Griffin. He built into those roads a combination of components that, in any given place, will work differently—but they are all possible. So, in a sense, the roads are not unlike, say, St Kilda Road in Melbourne, where there is an enormous variety of ways that that road is used over its length—all of which are appropriate. What the planning has done in Canberra is given us that long-term possibility—those roads are serving a particular purpose now in a particular way but they can undergo enormous change and still function effectively.

Mr JENKINS—I think we are starting to see that on the urban fringe around my area in Melbourne. There are these grand entrances into subdivisions. I do not know whether they are going to have the same effect as the Griffin vision for around here, but definitely they give that sense of vista—though, obviously, they are not ceremonial—and give you a presence when you return home, and so on.

Mr KERR—I want to ask a question on one other aspect of sustainability which seems to be pretty significant—that is, water. I reflect that I travelled to Fatehpur Sikri in India, the capital built by the Mogul emperors which was abandoned about 40 years after it was built. It was a magnificent ‘Canberra’ for India which sits there in all its magnificence—not ruined magnificence—from about eight centuries ago. We do not face quite those pressures, but obviously water and the sustainable use of water in this city are matters of current concern. If you are talking about increased population, it is going to be a continuing issue. What strategies or thoughts do you have about sustainable use of water—the availability of it, regulation of it, management of it and the like?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—I wish I was that clever. The reality is that the total amount of water that is available to us has not changed, and in some senses we have to get smarter about the way we use it. I think that is the message that we are getting from the recent effects of the drought. There are potentially major consequences if the nature of the way in which we are able to use water in this city particularly changes. We have historic landscapes that were planted in the early days of the city that would cost millions of dollars to replace if they were to be lost. We have already experienced the stress on trees from a reduction in water usage, and part of the work that we are doing through our water management strategies for the bits we are responsible for is addressing those sorts of issues. We can get a lot smarter with what happens to the water after we have used it, and we have done so. Grey water recycling, split systems and those sorts of initiatives are very real opportunities that we have not, until relatively recently, had to think about. This is not a problem that is unique to us, by any means. We are perhaps a little more vulnerable, but we are also a little more fortunate, in that in planning the city and the ACT one of the requirements that

was built into the selection criteria for the site for the city was a secure, adequate water supply for the long term. Built into the planning of the city are those reservations for future dams and so on. So the capacity is there, and that is about the forward planning of it. But it is probably a lot smarter for us to apply the pressure at the other end, and that is about how we use what we have, rather than trying to get more storage.

CHAIR—In your role, though, Canberra seems to have something a lot of other cities desire, and that is a regional overview which looks at the various elements of our existence, both as a species in the ecology and also what humans desire in terms of living standards, employment opportunities and all those kinds of things. You have that and seem to have with the structure plan an overview capability to shape and mould land use planning decisions at a strategic level. Are you able to, as we have been asked to consider, impose upon the planning authority requirements to look at triple piping for subdivisions, to go four- and five-star energy ratings and to consider all of these technologies that are no-brainers? They are here now, and we are travelling around the country and seeing this best practice all over the place, yet there seems to be some reluctance to embrace what is here now. Are you in a position to exercise those kinds of signals to the territory planning authority, to say, ‘These performance characteristics are as significant as the strategic guide that we provide’? Do you have those tools, and do you exercise them?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—That is a question which is probably best directed to the ACT Planning and Land Authority, who will follow us. I think they will be able to demonstrate that a lot of those things are already in place and that they have a number of initiatives—things like four-star energy ratings on houses and so on. In our own role we certainly attempt to do that through our approval processes. Our view is that we should be building contemporary buildings so they are contemporary to the environment in which they are built at the time.

Mr BARRESI—Regarding your non-urban land use strategy and plan, the ridgeways, the valleys and everything are just magnificent to look and to drive through, but after the recent Canberra bushfires one of the criticisms has been that Canberra has a lot bushland freeways for bushfires to travel along very quickly and get to the heart of the city. Has that caused you and the ACT government to revise your whole planning model for Canberra and its growth? Are there some revisions being made as a result of that?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—Not in terms of the extent of those areas that have been reserved for the purpose of the setting of the city. Certainly in the management of those areas, which is almost exclusively a responsibility of the ACT government, there will be revisions, and we are cooperating with and supportive of those changes.

Mr BARRESI—So it is about the management, rather than about looking at the actual design and locations?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—Among the studies that were undertaken following the bushfires was an urban edge review, which was about looking at the nature of the relationship between the open space areas and the adjacent urban areas.

Ms GEORGE—So you will continue to allow pine plantations in close proximity to new housing developments?

Mr Scott-Bohanna—That is not our decision. In a sense, the pine plantations were acknowledged in the National Capital Plan because they were already there, rather than because of a decision that there should be pine plantations. It was more a case of having a natural setting for the city than a decision that we were going to encourage or require pine plantations. That is a decision for the ACT government in terms of the way those lands are developed.

CHAIR—Talking about Canberra's destiny, you guys have more horsepower than any metropolis that I have ever been to. At times, though, to an outsider it looks like a battle of the bureaucracies in which regular folks, who may feel very passionately about the destiny of their neighbourhood, their community and their capital, may not get the hearing they deserve. We have heard evidence from other parts of the country in which the experts certainly have their place in some of the best efforts at developing and nurturing sustainable communities but regular folks and their hopes for the future are as strong a driver and as important. When you have all this horsepower, how does one person's or one community's voice get heard in all of that? How do you pick up things that matter to them that might not immediately strike you as a land use planning challenge?

Mr Wright—Reflecting on the ACT's efforts with the Spatial Plan exercise, I cannot think of a planning study that has given such emphasis to the consultative process. In fact, it has almost become the methodology of that plan. The opportunities for the people to express themselves and their feelings and values is, I think, one of the very great strengths of the ACT Spatial Plan. Our area of direct influence tends to be more specific when we are dealing with amendments to the National Capital Plan, yet, again, there are a number of opportunities for consultation. There are statutory provisions we have to go through, there is the possibility of a hearing—

CHAIR—That struck me more as: 'Here's where we are at; what do you think?' whereas the Western Sydney and Shoalhaven examples were a little more organic in that, before using all the land use planning horsepower that you guys have at your disposal, there is a conversation at the front end. All that talent and ability was applied after people started describing the kinds of neighbourhoods they wanted and the quality of life, values and aspirations they had. You had a lot of that going on first, and then the experts came in and said, 'We might be able to achieve that by putting these policy instruments in place,' and so on. Is it a bit like: 'Here is what the experts think; come and tell us what you reckon, and we will defend what we think, or explain why maybe our view is wiser than somebody else's.' I am just wondering whether you could turn the process around a bit.

Mr Wright—I guess the way to distinguish that is that the expert imprint was the Y plan; it was devised in a period when 'consultation' was spelt with a 'K'; it was a different era. In the ACT Spatial Plan—and I am sure my territory colleagues are much better placed to describe it than I am—I think that is very much the way that they have addressed the problems they face now. It is saying: 'This is where we have come from; this is where we are at. Where do we need to go from here?' The methodology they have adopted is extremely consultative.

CHAIR—They seem to start with a proposition that already has some fences around it. You guys put the overview in place. But, in terms of consultation, whose baby is it? You guys impose a megastructure on the assembly and then they can do all they want. But, if they are running into walls with you guys, where does a community with a passion fit into that process, or do they get rolled over? Whose job is it to make sure that all that input comes together?

Mr Wright—It is actually both authorities. The ACT has devised a forward plan for the ACT—a new vision, if you can describe it like that. It has a number of implications for the National Capital Plan. A number of the elements—for example, possible urban development in the Stromlo Valley—would require an amendment to the National Capital Plan. If the authority were to agree to that and to agree to propose an amendment, that would invoke the consultative processes that are embodied in the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act. So there is a proactive opportunity, and that has been exercised through the Spatial Plan. Then there is a responsive opportunity, where the proposals embodied in the Spatial Plan are incorporated into the National Capital Plan. So there is a genuine sense of partnership and common interest.

CHAIR—Regarding that explanation about how it all fits together, I will consult Jennie a bit later.

Mr Scott-Bohanna—She will explain it to you.

CHAIR—That was a very special kind of Canberra clarification!

Mr Wright—We will send you a couple of maps.

CHAIR—We need a flow chart, and a crayon drawing would probably help! Thank you very much for your time today. If you have any ideas that come out of our consultation, we are always open for input. We value any advice you might have as a result of today. Thank you for making the time available.

[12.06 p.m.]

GEORGE, Ms Christal, Sustainability Campaigner, Save the Ridge

VIKSTROM, Mr Anton, Sustainability Campaigner, Save the Ridge

Mr Vikstrom—It was very nice of you to hear from the speaker from the National Capital Authority. I am sorry to be butting in here. I am here for Save the Ridge. Could we speak for a moment?

CHAIR—We will give you some time while the ACT folks get here. You have to keep it sharp and quick, because you are not on the program. This is highly unusual, but you are here and you are believers. We will give you a couple of minutes each.

Mr Vikstrom—We are here about the construction of the Gungahlin Drive extension, which is a freeway which is being planned to be built in about two weeks time through biodiverse bushland in the Canberra region. It runs over endangered species, Aboriginal sites—you name it. In December 2002, the NCA categorically overruled the ACT government in the planning of this road and changed the route—a route that had been previously devised through community consultation to be a best option involving all these suburbs.

CHAIR—So you think we should look at the way those agencies interact with each other?

Ms George—In terms of sustainability, the community wanted the least destructive route, and we are miffed as to why the NCA overrode that community consultation; it just seems the road building is incompatible. In 2004, why can we not make the move now for sustainability? Why can we not do it now? We are in Canberra. We are in Australia. We can use world's best practice here and now. It might cost some money, but we have the money. What are we spending the money on if we are not spending it on the community?

CHAIR—That is probably your couple of minutes. Thank you.

Mr Vikstrom—Thank you very much.

Ms George—We appreciate your time.

CHAIR—We appreciate your input. As we clear through the fog on the structural interrelationships, we can feed in that decision process as well.

Ms George—We have the means and capacity to achieve sustainability now.

Mr Vikstrom—I would love to stay and listen to the ACT government, but I have work to do.

CHAIR—So have we, so I will call the representative of the ACT government.

[12.09 p.m.]

SAVERY, Mr Neil, Chief Planning Executive, Australian Capital Territory Planning and Land Authority

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

Mr Savery—I appear before you on behalf of the ACT government, representing its submission. I would also like to make the point, given the complexity and diversity of the topic that we are talking about, that I also sit on the Planning Officials Group. You may have already heard from other representatives of the Planning Officials Group, but it includes the national heads of all the state and territory planning departments.

CHAIR—Before you go any further, I must tell you that the evidence you give us is under oath. You may be in contempt of parliament if you do not respect that. Please take that on board. Please go on with your introductory remarks.

Mr Savery—Just to backtrack a bit, I am a representative of the Planning Officials Group, but I am not here to represent their positions. I am also a member of the Australian Building Codes Board, which deals with many societal issues—things like energy efficiency, noise attenuation et cetera which are increasingly affecting societies—and sustainability issues. I am a member of the Planning Institute, which I think has also made a submission to you—

CHAIR—A good submission.

Mr Savery—particularly about the liveable communities communique. It is not my intention to go through the ACT government's submission verbatim, but I wanted to highlight some key issues. I note from the questions that you have just asked the NCA that your focus is very much on the detail planning for Canberra. In preparing our submission, which is a whole-of-government submission, not just the planning authority's point of view, we took the approach of looking at issues of national importance, the role of Canberra within that national context and how international trends are impacting on the sustainability of cities and regions. So that is how our report was structured.

In the first instance we have talked about initiatives that the ACT government, generally, is taking to improve the sustainability of Canberra, so it is not from a purely planning perspective but one that is social, economic, cultural, physical et cetera. Whilst I missed the start of the presentation from the NCA, I picked up on the fact that there was some discussion about the Spatial Plan, which I will obviously talk about. The Spatial Plan sits within the framework of the Canberra plan, which is yet to be launched—and, in fact, the Spatial Plan itself has not been launched; it will be launched tomorrow. This is a copy of it, which I cannot hand to you; it is embargoed. But I will undertake to get you a copy tomorrow, because I think it is quite important for you to have. The economic white paper also sits within that framework and has been released, as has the social plan. When you pull those together they form the triple bottom line

approach to undertaking improvements to city planning and development as well as the wellbeing of individuals who reside in those cities.

There is also a broader sustainability document called *People place prosperity* produced by the ACT government that also forms an integral part of this whole program. It basically sets the sustainability agenda in terms of certain targets and measures that the government wants to achieve. One of the key documents arising out of that is the ACT Greenhouse Strategy to in part try to achieve some of the initiatives and actions identified by the National Greenhouse Strategy, and within that there are a range of initiatives that promote actions specifically for Canberra in terms of how it should reduce its ecological impact on the surrounding area.

I think it is important to make the point that, whilst the ACT government do not purport to do the planning for the subregion within which we exist, we nonetheless try very hard to work with the New South Wales jurisdiction and the surrounding councils to ensure that what we do does not adversely impact on them and, likewise, that what they do does not adversely impact on us. To that end there are regular regional leaders forums where issues of common interest are discussed. Obviously, the issues of sustainability are paramount, including issues such as water and energy use, because we both derive energy and water from each other in different respects. These issues also include the broad physical planning; the provision of services and infrastructure obviously has enormous impacts in a subregional sense.

As you heard from Graham from the NCA, we have a very strong working relationship with the NCA as to how the city develops. We have slightly different interests, but at the end of the day we are all planners. We all try to achieve similar outcomes and sustainability in its totality—that means many things to different people, obviously—which is one of the key priorities.

In relation to some specific outcomes for Canberra, what we have endeavoured to identify is the way that issues of social cohesion, economic wellbeing, financial management and physical development are actually integrated. You cannot necessarily separate those issues without understanding what their implications are for each other. If we look at what is happening in a national context the impact on Canberra could be quite profound. We have the globalisation of cities. The competing environment that they are operating in means that, in many cases, cities are trying to outbid each other for different land uses, different activities and different investment climates. That may not necessarily be in the best interests of the nation.

To that end we have certainly conveyed in our submission, and I can also speak as a representative of the Planning Officials Group, that we believe that a stronger national approach needs to be taken in relation to the delivery of sustainable outcomes for the cities of Australia. Included with that are the towns and the regions that obviously live off or interact with those cities. By that we are saying that, unless we take a national approach, the chances are that through a competitive model brought about by globalisation we will have a waste of resources. As cities duplicate infrastructure they do not necessarily use their comparative advantages to the best outcomes, whereas a national approach might say, 'In this instance, we should be directing population growth to point A. As a result of demographic change in point B we need to be doing something about that. We need to be promoting employment in this centre for different reasons.' Whilst, obviously, I am not here to suggest that the integrity of the states should be undermined—and inevitably they will want to compete and bid for different activities—there is

an opportunity for a broader national policy framework to exist that we believe will make a significant contribution to the sustainability not only of cities but of Australia generally.

The Spatial Plan which, as I say, I cannot give you a copy of now, but it is due to be launched tomorrow by the ACT Minister for Planning, is obviously focused on Canberra but it takes a subregional outlook in terms of the impacts that this document will have on the development of towns and regions around Canberra. It does not purport to do the planning of the subregion but nonetheless it will have a significant impact on the planning of the subregion. What it does do is to move away from the Y plan that you have already heard the NCA talk about and introduces the notion of a compact city or a city that is contained.

This is an approach that is being adopted almost universally throughout Australia and internationally in Western countries where the sprawl of cities is recognised as being unsustainable from an environmental, social and economic point of view. That is not accepted by all people, including many academics; there are different views on this. Planning invites many different views and you will never reconcile all of those views. But in order for us to have a society where, for instance, neighbourhoods can develop and prosper, where we can provide infrastructure within the financial means available to us and where we can confine the physical impacts of the city to areas that are urban suitable, we have to contain the city.

What the Spatial Plan advocates is that in radiating out from the city centre, being Civic, we should not develop beyond the extent of Gungahlin and Tuggeranong. In other words, a 15-kilometre radius is determined to be appropriate. That sets a completely different dynamic for the future development of Canberra. It also projects for a population of 500,000 people. The current demographics in that 30-year time frame are somewhere in the order of 430,000 to 450,000 people within the subregion, including Queanbeyan. We as planners believe that it is responsible for us to anticipate that in that 30-year time frame there may be significant changes in national policy to do with population, for example the potential development of the Sydney-Canberra corridor. If Sydney introduces a very significant containment boundary of its own, and certainly the Premier has speculated on that, then that population that would have otherwise gone there is going to go somewhere else. We have a contingency plan in place.

Beyond that, we are basically saying that if there is to be further population growth—100 or 200 years from now—it has to be contained within that 15-kilometre radius. The reality is that there is not a lot more land within the boundaries of the ACT that you could develop without significantly interfering with your biodiversity values, the water catchments et cetera.

That introduces some very interesting issues for the ACT government in terms of future revenue sources. Obviously, one of its critical revenue sources at the moment is the sale of land. It does not make any apology for the fact that the Spatial Plan and the economic white paper are focused on continued land sales as part of an urban development program. It is one of its primary revenue sources to deliver and sustain physical and social services to the population of the ACT and beyond. There are many people in New South Wales who obviously benefit from that infrastructure. We are providing ourselves with a 30-year time frame in which we have to identify other sources of revenue to sustain those services.

Also, as part of the Canberra Spatial Plan we are saying that there will be an increased level of intensification of development. We will see urban infill on a greater scale but we believe there

are a series of strategic sites where most of that can be contained. One of them is Constitution Avenue, which you have already heard about. We are working very closely with the NCA to look at how that development should take place. Broadly speaking, I have covered those issues.

One last thing I will mention is that the state and territory governments, through the Planning Officials Group, are endeavouring to host a national summit in Canberra on 3 and 4 June. It is intended that that will operate as a workshop environment. Delegates will be invited—it will be by invitation only. Obviously, sustainability will be high on the agenda. The purpose of having it is to progress a number of these national initiatives because—and we say this quite plainly in the submission—there is an absence of Commonwealth interest in some of these national planning issues.

CHAIR—Thank you. In your paper you identify a range of opportunities for Commonwealth participation. You lead off with the summit, the urban population policy, incentives for better energy and water technology use, building code advancements and the like. Are you imagining, in terms of Commonwealth engagement, resourcing to support the implementation of those things or are you imagining that within the current spread of resources made available through the Commonwealth, either tied or untied, there may be some expectation amongst the state and territory jurisdictions to engage in these kinds of activities as a condition of the funding?

Mr Savery—In the first instance—I am endeavouring to faithfully represent state and territory ministers on this subject—it is to engage the Commonwealth in the discussion to get an appreciation of the issues and to assist in the development of a national policy framework. I do not think it would be unrealistic to suggest that there may well then be an expectation of financial assistance, depending on the outcomes of that national policy framework.

CHAIR—With road funding, for instance, there is no requirement to produce an active transport plan. The money is just handed over and if it is spent poorly it is spent poorly. That greater involvement may be perceived as imposing some expectations on state and territory jurisdictions. Is the time right to have that conversation? We think it is; that is why we are having the inquiry.

Mr Savery—I believe the time is right and I believe I speak on behalf of my colleagues. That is why these initiatives to engage the Commonwealth are being introduced. That is not to do a disservice to the Commonwealth in recognising that it already does fund a range of programs that have a bearing on the operation and performance of cities.

CHAIR—Our view too is that where human settlement and sustainability are done poorly, the costs of that often land on the Commonwealth—the social consequences, the health consequences and income support for poor access to economic opportunities. So there is an interest in prevention as well.

Mr Savery—One of the key issues is that often the Commonwealth will see planning as a state and territory responsibility.

CHAIR—Or it will be told that it is.

Mr Savery—Yes, exactly. That is when planning is looked at in the very traditional context of the regulation and administration of planning systems—for example, development approvals, changes to territory plans et cetera. Every state and territory has them. We are really trying to raise this to the level of strategic planning and look at how it operates nationally.

CHAIR—We are sympathetic to that, given the inquiry.

Ms GEORGE—Thanks for your submission; I found it really useful. I am interested in the point you made about social cohesion being a very important issue for consideration. In big cities like Sydney we are finding that development has meant socioeconomic stratification. The leader of our party describes it as the ‘arc theory’—the inner part of the city being gentrified and very expensive, the old suburbs decaying and people who can afford it going into the city fringe. I know that Canberra is much smaller, but are you seeing the same kind of social outcome—social stratification? Is part of your strategy of limiting release and further development to confined boundaries also partly driven by the wish to maintain a mix?

Mr Savery—Yes, very much so. You are right in noting that the dynamics of Canberra are different, and it has a higher socioeconomic status than most other cities, but it is not immune from some of those outcomes. There are examples, whilst they may not physically manifest themselves, of gated communities in the sense that certain socioeconomic brackets are confined to certain geographic areas through affordability or through segregation—where neighbourhoods have sought to exclude them. That is not overt; much of it is through communities endeavouring to protect their character and in doing so prevent what they would deem to be undesirable people from entering their communities.

A typical example of that—and, again, this is not unique to Canberra—is people seeing multiunit high rise development as attracting undesirable people. Planning makes no judgment about the type of people that might enter that market, but a community may endeavour to resist that type of development. They are in effect trying to protect not only their character but also their community identity, the socioeconomic bracket that they aspire to, but they will not come out and say that. The social plan, the Spatial Plan and the Canberra plan broadly are trying to break down some of those concepts. For instance, some of the initiatives that will come out in the near future will try to ensure that there is a good mix of housing choice and affordability within different neighbourhoods, so that certain types of housing are not consolidated in one part of the city.

Ms GEORGE—Can you forward a copy of the report that you talked about, *People place prosperity*, to the committee?

Mr Savery—Yes.

Mr JENKINS—You mentioned the need for a national approach and you highlighted both today and in your submission the effect of globalisation. I suppose what you are saying is that under that national approach there is a requirement for a form of intervention to more equitably spread either the spoils or the pain of globalisation. I understand that. You have talked about a holistic approach and how often the competitive nature of different jurisdictions under the Federation has meant that there are aberrations that we can do without.

What concerns me about the national approach and the notion of a compact city is that it gets destroyed because there will be market pressures. In a way we saw it on the urban fringe of Melbourne with the metropolitan plan. The pressures there led to a market that put things outside the scope of people economically and they leapfrogged to a region that was beyond. That has changed. It was never a compact city, but we have moved the notion of the metropolitan plan and it has caught up with the people that went to the hinterlands on the urban fringe—the outer fringe; they were well outside. But, there again, there was market pressure. It always concerns me that we can get the Spatial Plan and the economic planning, the social planning—terrific—but, at the end of the day, we are under pressures that I can best describe as market pressures.

Mr Savery—I think it is a good description, and it is always difficult to reconcile your planning aspirations with those market pressures. The Melbourne 2030 strategy, as you are obviously aware, has introduced a containment boundary. The containment boundary has had regard to places like Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong because they are the places that development will leapfrog to, but in some cases that has actually been identified as a desirable outcome, and critical infrastructures such as the fast rail links between those cities are being developed almost as an advocacy for that type of response. Whereas, in Adelaide a containment boundary has been introduced and the peripheral regions, or the smaller townships—where you would imagine leapfrogging would occur—will get their own containment boundaries. There is a much stronger position in Adelaide, which has enormous water, energy and other types of constraints, and it will be confined to the existing urban boundary.

The issue for us is to understand the market dynamics and understand what globalisation might bring so that, whilst we cannot necessarily control it, we can at least have some strategies in place that will be able to deal with the outcomes of that. At the moment, we are in such a reactive environment and we are all chasing our tails, and the cities that are out there developing in many cases are not keeping pace with the provision of the infrastructure that is required. We do have this segregation of communities by distance, the tyranny of distance, in the outer suburbs of Sydney. They are just so remote from centres of employment, and it is typically the elderly, the unemployed, that get caught out in the fringe. It is having an understanding and putting in place policies that, in many cases, can be national in their approach, because the issues are similar throughout the country and the Western world, particularly in America and Canada where they experience a similar sort of city growth.

Mr JENKINS—I take it the planning officials acknowledge that this national approach goes beyond just what you people are talking about. The emphasis on that holistic approach means that we really do have to get down to the provision of a whole host of different types of infrastructure.

Mr Savery—Absolutely, and if I use Canberra as an example, and I arrived in Canberra only recently—six months ago—I keep saying you almost have to treat the planning here as if there is no territory boundary. That is the way you have to look at planning.

CHAIR—I wonder about the big challenge of changing what is in people's hearts and in their heads. When you do not get a lot of disagreement around the strategic goals of containment plans and the like and you get all the head nods it is comforting, but then you go and talk to a real life human and you find they have aspirations of their own and amenity expectations from their neighbourhood and, more often than not, those expectations do not necessarily sit neatly

with the policy goals. What kind of work and what kind of helpfulness can the Commonwealth provide to try and better match virtuous strategic planning outcomes with what people are attracted to and would welcome?

Take the city I am from, Frankston, and beyond: it is outer metropolitan sprawl, and it takes longer to get from there to Melbourne than it does from Geelong. You go and talk to them about urban consolidation and they say, 'I will think about that after I have finished commuting for 3½ hours during the day.' I just wonder whether the whole human experience needs to be brought into this containment idea. We tell someone they are going to have a postage stamp property next door to them and there is no apparent upside for them; there are not the other elements of the contained village there; there are not the economic opportunities nearby; and the social infrastructure, services and lifestyle opportunities are not enhanced. I just wonder whether we are heavily selling what is perceived to be a downside without maybe articulating the upside of these policies and showing there is hopefully a better standard of living for people because of them.

Mr Savery—In think, unfortunately, there is an inevitability to this conversation about the way in which we can change the understanding and attitude of individuals towards major issues like urban infill because typically they have a total disinterest until it materially affects them—that is, until it is next door to them. That is not a criticism; it is just human behaviour and nature. I have recently worked on the Melbourne strategy and the Adelaide spatial plan and am now working on the Canberra Spatial Plan. There have been enormous amounts of consultation—you could say consultation by death—and yet, after almost 16,000 representations in the development of that over 18 months, we end up with 138 submissions, the majority of which are from key interest groups, which will always make submissions. The broad mass of the population, I would imagine, will not until tomorrow—

CHAIR—Some might find that a bit of a yawn until—

Mr Savery—Yes, until we start implementing this. What will end up happening, and we would always like to avoid this, is that as five- and six-storey buildings start going up along Northbourne Avenue to accommodate more people, many of whom choose to live there—it is not because of policy; the marketplace, with the change in demographics, is creating an environment where people not always but often want to live in these sorts of apartments—that will cause a reaction. The reaction will manifest itself in the papers and in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. They will escalate it up the line because they will go as far as they can to try to prevent it from happening if it is not what they want.

CHAIR—Take, for instance, a neighbourhood that is part of the consolidation push. There are many different ways of describing it but we are kind of looking back at recreating villages almost where there is a mosaic of life, experiences and opportunities and people can feel fulfilled in that existence in that environment, yet sometimes the planning process sanitises all that human experience out of the exercise. We have strip shopping centres that are falling over because they cannot compete with the big stores, but has anyone thought about chucking a house above the top of them and bringing alive the neighbourhood? That is a little bit untidy in planning terms. I am just wondering whether we can oversanitise and therefore through our virtuous endeavours create the homogeneity that is the big turn-off, which is in part causing some of the problems themselves.

Mr Savery—I well understand that the appearance from the outside might be that the whole process is sanitised. Certainly if you look back through the history of planning here and elsewhere planners in the past have endeavoured to create segregation by land use policy—that is, residential here and industrial there.

CHAIR—Ugly stuff over here and noisy stuff over there.

Mr Savery—Conventional wisdom is very different to that. The way in which we practise getting those land use policies into place is highly consultative. I would spend at least 50 per cent of my time talking to people. Other members of staff obviously spend equal if not a greater amount of time. A recent experience of neighbourhood planning in Canberra—which if you were to read the papers you would say, ‘Shock! Horror! The planners are walking over the local residents’—from my point of view is one that has been very engaging, that has genuinely tried to take on board the community’s view and that has tried to articulate what the pros and cons of these different policy settings will be through visual demonstration and bringing in people who have actually had those experiences. You try to tailor your consultation process to different audiences. If you are dealing just with the industry group they are far more interested in what this is going to mean financially, what the planning constraints and impediments are and how we are going to streamline the process, whereas if you are talking to a residents group it is very much about bricks and mortar—what the aesthetic outcome is, whether this will mean increased insecurity and whether we are going to improve the public lighting down the street. You work through all of that.

CHAIR—My thesis is that when people are in a building mode themselves and creating assets for themselves they are thinking about assets in the community. When they are past that stage and it is all about quality of life and they are raising kids or looking for some more altruistic value to their existence then they shift that way and come back to you wondering why there is not communal feng shui in the neighbourhood they live in. I wonder there is a bit of catch-up footy that happens there. One example is in Yarralumla, near the forestry oval there at CSIRO. I do not know what you did, but five years ago it was not so good and now it is fantastic! But it is untidy, because there is now a wine bar there and a cafe and it is alive! My wife, who is from Melbourne, said, ‘This is great,’ and I congratulate you, whether it occurred through serendipity or error. That kind of vitality at a neighbourhood level was really engaging, because you had many aspects of a decent existence in one neighbourhood, and the locals love the place. I do not know whether that was planned or not.

Ms GEORGE—They serve lattes, do they?

CHAIR—I do not know, I did not get one. I had a Tarax creaming soda from the supermarket, which was open because there were people there. There are offices across the road now, and it is a nice place to be. If you lucked in, you lucked in good!

Mr Savery—At the risk of offending my NCA colleagues or anyone else—as a recent arrival—planners, as you would expect, often talk about Canberra. We would say, from the outside, that it needs organised chaos—

CHAIR—I guess that is the point I am making.

Mr Savery—It is so structured.

CHAIR—Sanitisation seems to be killing the humanity of these spaces.

Mr Savery—A lot of the work of the NCA and what we are doing is about introducing those opportunities.

CHAIR—You did great! It is now on to Stewie, from Geelong, which is nearer to my end of the fence now.

Mr Savery—Yes, I know Stewart.

Mr McARTHUR—Chair, I draw your attention to the fact that Mr Savery was well trained in Geelong before he got to the rarefied air of the ACT. That is why he is going well.

CHAIR—That is right—you have got that freeway there with not the right number of cars on it; we cannot even get any transport infrastructure in place.

Mr McARTHUR—I have two quick questions. Firstly, you say in your submission that landfill has been reduced by 63 per cent. Could you tell us how that was achieved?

Mr Savery—Most of it has been achieved through education and the provision of services that actually provide the opportunity to recycle their product, like the development of waste transfer stations, and a genuine endeavour to try and have people be more conscious about the way in which they use products so that you actually have less material going to landfill.

Mr McARTHUR—Do you manage to acquit the recycled product commercially?

Mr Savery—As far as I am aware, although I could not accurately represent that.

Mr McARTHUR—Over what sort of period was this 63 per cent reduction in landfill achieved? Five years or 10 years?

Mr Savery—I am not familiar with the whole landfill program, but I believe that when the strategy for No Waste by 2010 was introduced—about five or so years ago—that was when the monitoring was put in place. The ACT is still aiming at having no landfill by 2010 and, obviously, we are well on the way to achieving that.

Mr McARTHUR—No landfill?

Mr Savery—There will be waste transfer stations and there will be the need for certain types of putrescent waste.

Mr McARTHUR—I spent a lot of time on the bushfire committee, and I notice that in your submission you talk about the conservation values of the ACT and surrounding areas. Have you got a view on fuel reduction burning and the problem that no fuel reduction burning caused when Canberra nearly got burnt out?

Mr Savery—I would have to be a bit cautious about my response to that—

Ms GEORGE—Good try, Stewie!

Mr Savery—given the ongoing coronial inquiry.

Mr JENKINS—That was stretching the friendship, Stewie.

Mr McARTHUR—You do say in your submission that the conservation values are important.

Mr Savery—I would like to make a comment generally on this topic, and it also picks up on a comment that the NCA, quite rightly, was not in a position to respond to, about the development of the urban edge study. That was a direct response to the McLeod inquiry; it was one of the recommendations. What is being proposed and will be announced tomorrow is the introduction of an abatement zone around the entirety of Canberra. Within that—and I think one of your questions was about forestry—forestry will no longer be a permitted land use. It is pushing inappropriate activities that might add to the fuel load et cetera away from the urban boundaries. It also puts in place a fairly strenuous fire management program. This is subject to further work, but we have identified a series of cross-sections for the different landscapes and topography that exist in and around Canberra because you need to have different fuel management programs for those different landscapes.

Mr McARTHUR—You have answered the question very well, contrary to my colleagues being somewhat suspicious of my question.

CHAIR—Stewie has got form, Neil. I understand that the waste recovery and recycling strategy uses pricing as a key persuader in the financial levers issue. Are you imagining an expansion of that kind of thinking?

Mr Savery—Certainly. I think the NCA mentioned the opportunity to use paid parking as a disincentive for people to use their cars, encouraging them to use public transport rather than drive, as one of the more obvious ones. It is already being applied elsewhere. In Perth they use the financial lever to operate their free bus circuit in the city. The ACT is in a fairly unique position, because of its structure, to use the leasehold arrangements to derive other sustainability benefits. They are not so necessary in relation to energy efficiency, for instance. The Australian Building Codes Board has introduced a national standard for energy efficiency. Whilst all states and territories at the moment operate at around the four-star level most of them are now talking about moving to five stars, and the Building Codes Board is looking at May 2005 to introduce mandatory energy ratings for commercial and multistorey residential buildings.

CHAIR—That is quite fast; everything else moves at a glacial pace.

Mr Savery—Eight states and territories, industry, Commonwealth trying to get agreement—

CHAIR—Federation is a wonderful thing, isn't it? What about car rego pricing and things like that for higher fuel efficiency?

Mr Savery—All of those are opportunities to look at ways to improve or reduce car use.

CHAIR—My understanding is that Canberra has got one of the highest rates of cars being provided as part of salary packages of any city in the country. The FBT on motor vehicles would be—

Mr McARTHUR—The ACT could be a leader.

CHAIR—It could be. They could give the money back and we could give it back again—that would be great.

Mr Savery—Again I will probably get myself into trouble for saying this: most Commonwealth departments have free public car parking.

CHAIR—It was put to us by the bicycle people that people riding their bikes to work should be able to treat it as an FBT expense, whereas the more you drive your car around the less the tax is. That is leading you a little bit, you might have noticed.

Mr Savery—Yes; that is why I am being a bit evasive.

CHAIR—On the collaborative progress where housing goes out and the social fabric takes a while to develop, is there more proactive work needed to nurture community networks, given that the neighbourhoods are screaming on? Is there a preventative ethos of putting some of the community and family support services in place using first-in-place assets, for example a school, before you get a maternal and child health centre and so on?

Mr Savery—Very much so. Again it is one of the advantages that Canberra has over other cities that it has that capacity to coordinate the provision of those services with the release of land, whereas elsewhere release of land and its development is more in the private domain. For example, the land release program around north Gungahlin is talking about public transport existing before much of the housing. This was something I recently picked up in Germany when I was there; with new developments they put their public transport system in before the housing so that people culturally adapt to using public transport before they start using their cars. Once they are in their cars, it is very difficult to get them back out again.

CHAIR—But your profession has some levers to do that, and I would say they are not often exercised. We were at Green Valley a couple of weeks ago when the council was celebrating putting in park infrastructure 30 years after the housing went in. Just over the back there was a new development—a suburb, the name of which I cannot recall—and we asked the question, ‘Have you require the property developer to put in place the social, physical and community infrastructure in parallel with the housing?’ The answer was no. There is an argument about how it costs more and all of that, but you are just transferring the cost to somebody else. I am just wondering whether planners are getting the political support to insist on more comprehensive development projects that have not just domicile assets but all the rest of the committee infrastructure delivered as part of them? Are you getting the support you need? Why are those existing levers not fully utilised?

Mr Savery—There are a number of levels at which that question should be answered. In the first instance, depending on what the governance arrangements are—whether or not it is a state government that has jurisdiction over a local government—you will find different degrees of

responsiveness. There are some local governments—and I am not picking any in particular—where the councillors, just by their very nature, will be far less interested in policy development, concept planning and forward planning and far more involved in planting trees, installing bins, cutting down trees and whether or not the extension is appropriate next to the neighbour. Whereas, as you move further up the hierarchy towards state government, you tend to have that broader understanding and appreciation of policy—and a greater emphasis on quality urban design et cetera. Again, Canberra tends to represent all of those qualities because it is almost a single level of government. So you get a good spread of policy and very rigorous development assessment—in some cases too much.

The other point that I want to make is about the multiplicity of what is going on here. There was an article recently from the *Melbourne Age* entitled ‘Planners drown in a sea of paperwork’. I think one of real issues here is that in many jurisdictions so much of the emphasis is being put on regulation and development assessment that the planning profession itself, as much as it wants to, cannot pull itself away from that and so we never get around to actually developing the policy that will deliver better outcomes. So a lot of what is in this article is supported by many of the jurisdictions. We need to change and evolve our planning systems, which in some cases will mean that there is less community involvement in the delivery of the development assessment and more in the production of the policy setting. We are engaged far too much, our resources are far too tied up, in that delivery of the development assessment.

CHAIR—Thank you for your time today.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr McArthur**):

That this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 12.53 p.m.