

SUBMISSION 32 .....



## **Submission by Canberra Business Council**

# **Inquiry into the National Capital Authority by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories**

**May 2003**

### **Introduction:**

The Canberra Business Council is a peak industry body that represents more than 300 business partners in the Australian Capital Region. Through the membership of 39 Kindred Organizations, a further 5,000 businesses in Canberra and the region are represented by Council activities and submissions.

The major objective of the Council is to achieve a better economic future for the Australian Capital Region through the growth of the private business sector. We do this by promoting the role of Canberra both as the National Capital and as a business centre and supporting the retention and growth of business across all industry sectors of the Australian Capital Region.

The Council is mindful of the role and importance of the National Capital to all Australians and the multiple functions of Canberra as the Australian National Capital, as a major regional hub for south-eastern New South Wales, as the home to more than 300,000 people, and as an important centre for business, education and research and innovation.

The Council conducts a number of taskforces in seeking to undertake its role and through these taskforces and discussions with and input from Councillors this submission has been prepared for the review.

### **Role and Purpose of the National Capital Authority:**

The Canberra Business Council is cognizant of the original role and purpose of the National Capital as being established as a place of national significance to be protected and administered in terms of planning and development by the Commonwealth on behalf of all Australians.

It was appropriate that with the advent of self government in the Territory in 1989 that separate planning bodies were established to enable Canberra to grow and develop with the dual roles in mind (ie. National Capital function and the role as home to a substantial population).

The introduction of the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 which gave rise to the National Capital Plan and the Territory Plan was designed to ensure the appropriate protection of the National Capital with regard to its dual role.

*The Canberra Business Council supports the role of the National Capital Authority as the principal body to oversee the National Capital's development through the National Capital Plan and believes the Act adequately sets out the roles and functions of the National Capital Authority.*

These roles and functions of the Authority are both robust and are still relevant in terms of achieving the clear objective of maintaining the National Capital on behalf of all Australians whilst allowing the Territory to function properly as the home to a substantial population.

The Commonwealth has always accepted its responsibility and commitment on behalf of all Australians to the planning and development of Canberra as the National Capital. The Commonwealth must always be engaged in that planning and development function in the Territory to reflect Canberra's national significance.

The introduction of self-government in the Territory has meant that this responsibility and commitment has given, and will continue to give rise to occasional rigorous discussion between the Commonwealth and Territory governments. The debate should not require any abrogation of responsibility on behalf of the people of Australia and including the residents of Canberra.

The Council is aware of the good working relationship enjoyed at a bureaucratic level between the two planning bodies. However we are concerned that the same level of engagement and cooperation is not being achieved at a political level. In order to focus on the important planning issues it is essential that political differences are set aside to

enable certainty to be created to achieve growth and development of Canberra and the Territory.

The fact that Canberra is the National Capital and was established on behalf of all Australians provides significant advantages to the Territory in promotional terms both at a national and international level.

*The Council, through many of its submissions, has always supported an increased role for the National Capital Authority in the promotion and marketing of the National Capital.* Fostering an awareness of Canberra as the National Capital is a core function of the Authority and within the constraints of existing resources the Authority has carried out this function in a very strategic and successful manner.

*The Canberra Business Council would urge that this function must be given a higher priority, and appropriate funding in order to create a greater sense of national pride in the National Capital in which all other jurisdictions are major stakeholders.*

To do this will require the commitment of additional financial and other resources and collaborative arrangements with relevant bodies such as Canberra Tourism and Events Corporation and the Canberra Convention Bureau. In this way pooled resources should result in an enhanced image for the National Capital, engendering of greater national pride, and greater awareness being fostered more rapidly and effectively.

In this context the Council believes the National Capital Authority should further pursue proposals to enhance and enliven the central formal areas of Canberra such as the Parliamentary triangle without compromising the formality.

The recent decision to allow kiosks beside Lake Burley Griffin is a step in the right direction. The lake itself is an under-utilised resource, with minimal development of any part of the foreshore. Provision of all services on and around the lake must be of a standard befitting the National Capital.

#### **Designated Areas:**

The Canberra Business Council supports the maintenance of current Designated Areas within the National Capital Plan and believes that the National Capital Authority is the appropriate authority to manage planning and works approval in Designated Areas.

This would reflect that all Territory land is owned by the Commonwealth and as such areas identified as having national significance should be managed on behalf of the Commonwealth by the National Capital Authority.

*The Council has supported a streamlining of the approvals process for developments where there are overlapping responsibilities between the National Capital Authority*

*and ACT Planning and Land Management. This is essential to remove the uncertainty and delays that have occurred previously and continue to occur for various projects.*

The purpose in establishing Designated Areas and special requirement areas would suggest that NCA is the appropriate approval body in these areas so as to be consistent with the object of the National Capital Plan as per section 9 of the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988.

If the National Capital Authority were the sole authority for all Designated Areas or special requirement areas, there would need to be an appropriate level of consultation with the ACT and industry regarding development. This would be particularly so for those areas in recognizable commercial and residential precincts as opposed to ceremonial and administrative areas such as the parliamentary zone. This would be consistent with ensuring that the interests of the people of Canberra are both fully represented and protected.

#### **Management of the National Capital Plan:**

The Canberra Business Council believes that the National Capital Authority properly manages the National Capital Plan and that the National Capital Plan is appropriately the Territory's major planning document in respect of areas of national interest.

Greater engagement with relevant industry groups would assist in improving the management of the National Capital Plan and bring greater understanding to the Authority of decision-making implications relating to National Capital Plan changes and development.

In this context the Council believes the National Capital Authority should become involved in issues affecting Canberra's role as the National Capital beyond the immediate confines of planning policies and decisions. For example the Authority could have, and express, views on major infrastructure development on the basis of the quality and capacity of such infrastructure that judgements will be made about Canberra's standing as the visitor's capital city.

#### **National Capital Authority and Planning and Land Management Relationship:**

Greater clarity is sought in the area of planning and approval between the National Capital Authority and ACT Planning and Land Management. This relates to the overlapping responsibilities of both planning bodies and this is the source of frustration and delay.

The Council, in keeping with earlier comments, would seek a clear delineation of responsibility for the planning and approval process that would provide greater certainty for all parties. At present the approval process is confusing and costly and not least of

all it has the propensity to stifle activity that would add to the well-being of the people of Canberra and to the Territory as the National Capital.

**Conclusion:**

The Canberra Business Council understands that the National Capital belongs to all Australians and is supportive of the continued role of the National Capital Authority as a statutory body to ensure a safe and effective mechanism for managing Territory land on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The Council believes it is vital that areas of uncertainty are removed in the relationship between the National Capital Authority and ACT Planning and Land Management whilst recognizing the dual functions of the National Capital.