

14 June 2013

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

Dear Senator Pratt

RE: Inquiry into provision of amenity within the Parliamentary Triangle

I have been interested to follow the ongoing discussion regarding facilities in the Parliamentary Triangle that has been occurring in the media, in the parliamentary committee submissions and in my workplace, which is located in this area. I have been particularly interested in the debate regarding the changing nature of the working environment in the Parliamentary Triangle and the associated arguments about whether to introduce paid parking. At times, the information I have read is at odds with the experience of those who work in the Parliamentary Triangle.

Tens of thousands of us work in this area every day. In my location alone—I work at Parliament House—I believe the number of workers is in excess of 4,000 on any given day when parliament is sitting. Many of us are rostered to work at specific hours, rather than the regular nine-to-five, with shifts often lasting till late into the night, and we are often called upon to work unexpected overtime. It is the nature of the modern workplace to have this range of working hours, although my workplace may be a little more extreme than most.

My workplace does provide secure parking for its workforce. However, with increases in the workforce since the building's construction, the number of spaces provided is nowhere near enough to meet peak demand. It is my understanding that this is the case for most other large workplaces in the Parliamentary Triangle and surrounding areas.

If I have driven around my workplace's car park and been unable to find somewhere to park, what are my options? I have to be at my desk at a specific time. There is no long-term street parking within reasonable walking distance. There is no place to park where I can use public transport and arrive at work on time. Usually my only option is to park my car in the 'public' car park for a couple of hours until my first break. Then I can try again to find a parking place in the staff car park.

This is where the pressure on public car parking at the national institutions is coming from. It is not primarily coming from 'all day' parkers who leave their cars out of choice in these car parks. It is coming from local workers who, in desperation, take the only option available. Were that option then to come at a substantial price, without alternatives being made available, this would lead to

further frustration and a sense of victimisation. It certainly will not take that pressure off the public car parks.

You will notice that I have not considered public transport as an option for travel to and from work. Even though I live in a suburb of Queanbeyan, there is no bus service that links my home location and my work location. Furthermore, I would be loath to rely on public transport, were it available, given that I often work till very late at night when bus services are either erratic or non-existent. I would also feel very vulnerable and unsafe waiting for and using public transport at night.

Canberra is a city designed for cars. Just look at the extensive—and ever-expanding—network of freeways, roundabouts, flyovers and bridges that makes getting around this place so easy. Hence, we feel encouraged and facilitated to drive to work. If that is the case, workplaces must be prepared to accommodate not just us but also our cars.

How might the competing needs of those working in, living in and visiting the Parliamentary Triangle be better accommodated? As a daily user of the Parliamentary Triangle, I have the following suggestions:

- That quantitative and qualitative research be undertaken to identify where the pressure on car parking in the Parliamentary Triangle and surrounding areas is coming from and what the current and anticipated shortfall in car parking might be within the area. This will allow for more informed discussion and decision making.
- That all new developments and substantive redevelopments or renovations in the Parliamentary Triangle and surrounding areas make provision for a realistic number of car parking spaces to accommodate the anticipated users now and into the future.
- That there be no more development of areas that are currently used for car parking in the Parliamentary Triangle and surrounding areas, unless that development incorporates at least as many car parking spaces as would otherwise be lost by resumption of the site.
- That consideration be given to construction of a centrally located secure car parking facility for the workers of the Parliamentary Triangle and surrounding areas with dedicated, regular, frequent shuttle bus services to and from locations within the area.

So far, the vast majority of the discussion around this issue seems to have come from the executives of organisations involved in or located within the Parliamentary Triangle and the surrounding areas. Has anyone been similarly proactive in contacting a range of those who work in the area and who will be affected on a daily basis by the decisions that are being considered?

I urge the committee to seek more information and opinion from individuals who live in, work in and visit this area. Their voices are important if the committee wants to understand the various perspectives of all users of this physically impressive and historically significant area of our beautiful city.

Yours sincerely

NAME WITHHELD