

### Comment on Proposed Access to Albert Hall

The usefulness of the April 2007 SMEC report on access to the Albert Hall area, has been severely compromised by the narrow confines of the NCA's brief to its consultants. SMEC has provided a thorough analysis of signalised options for connections to Commonwealth Ave at Kaye St and King Edward Terrace, without looking at vital aspects of the wider context. As a consequence the report has several major deficiencies including the following.

- It fails to compare traffic levels of service [LOS] and accessibility to the Albert Hall, with those of the existing arrangements which are quite adequate. The report merely asserts that access would be improved under the proposed arrangements for signal control on Commonwealth Avenue.
- It has had to assume that, as proposed in the "indicative" scheme that led to *Amendment 33: Parliamentary Zone Review* of 2001, the existing means of access to and from Commonwealth and Kings Avenue bridges and the Parliamentary Zone will be removed. The implications of this suggested change, which was only thought up to suit an indicative assemblage of future buildings, have not been properly examined or given any kind of public airing. Rather than simply assuming that a firm decision has already been taken to remove the loop roads to and from Commonwealth Avenue, the NCA should have commissioned its consultants to undertake an engineering analysis of that "indicative" idea. Instead it has commissioned that kind of detailed analysis for the present relatively local exercise associated with *Amendment 53: Albert Hall Precinct*.
- The SMEC report has therefore had to accept, without comment or clarification, that the PZ can no longer be entered via its two most important means of access - Flynn Drive and Bowen Drive. This is a highly significant omission. The closing off of these points of access, without a full engineering analysis of the implications, is clearly unacceptable. Until such an analysis is done, this bit of Amendment 33 will remain the subject of public objection because it poses serious practical problems.
- The report makes rather sketchy references to possible changes to King Edward Terrace, to reduce its use as a thoroughfare [ie a through route]. But its proposed signalised connection with Commonwealth Avenue, that gives priority to northbound traffic over Commonwealth bridge, will instead promote its *increased* use compared with the present loop system. This is but one example of the unforeseen consequences of removing the loop roads to central Canberra's main north-south links

#### Proposals for Commonwealth Ave

The report calls the proposed arrangement at King Edward Terrace and [new] Flynn Drive with Commonwealth Avenue an "intersection". Use of this term obscures the fact that it makes no provision for vehicle movements across the Avenue [ie no access to or from the PZ]. It is in fact two opposing tee junctions separated by a pedestrian crossing. Drivers will find the lack of provision for ANY cross movements hard to accept, especially as that lack will lower the level of service [ie increase delays] at Coronation Drive for anyone trying to enter the PZ.

The reshaping of traffic lanes with islands and signals will not enhance the appearance of Commonwealth Avenue as a formal axis, a fact that will become more apparent if and when trees are removed from the median to reveal its longitudinal perspective.

The report goes into considerable detail on the technicalities of forecasting year 2021 traffic levels on Commonwealth Avenue but fails to actually tell us how much it will increase [a % figure would be nice to know]. We have to take on trust the LOS figures, as a guide to what conditions will be like, and some of them are hard to believe – eg that some of the LOS at Coronation Drive will actually *improve* by 2021.

### **King Edward Terrace**

One can only agree with the aim of making King Edward Terrace more like a local main street, designed for the purpose of gaining access to the attractions of the PZ. How to do this, by a combination of rearranged connections [eg removal of the straight sections of Langton and Tangney] and traffic calming measures, should have been the subject of a thorough engineering analysis before Amendment 33 was considered by the Parliament.

As things now stand, the proposed signalised arrangement at the Commonwealth end will very substantially *facilitate* travel across the PZ from east to west, compared to the present route via the Flynn Drive loop road. The report hints at solving this problem by introducing another frustrating pair of opposed tee junctions where a realigned Bowen Drive is proposed to be built opposite King Edward Terrace. The problem with this, from a long-term planning viewpoint, is that the proposed realignments of Flynn Drive and Bowen Drive open up the possibility of a continuous route, which is prevented from being put into operation by the mere expedient of a couple of traffic islands and signal phasing at Kings and Commonwealth. Given that these tee arrangements also cut off two of the busiest points of access into and out of the PZ, it is highly likely that those traffic islands will be taken out at some future date in order to restore better access to the PZ. In that event the control of traffic along King Edward Terrace [which would then form part of a much more clearly defined route open to through traffic] would have to be managed entirely by means of load-limit regulations and traffic calming measures.

As the present access arrangements via Flynn and Bowen do not offer that degree of *apparent* continuity, and less *actual* directness for east to west movement, the ‘main street’ objective for King Edward Terrace derives little or no benefit from their proposed realignment. As well as this strategic consideration, there is the question of their high cost for questionable benefits. On those grounds alone, traffic calming measures should be implemented along King Edward Terrace before any further action is taken to change the present traffic arrangements along Commonwealth and Kings Avenues.

### **Conclusions**

- The SMEC report, because of the narrow scope of its brief, does not consider important strategic issues of vital importance to the future of the Parliamentary Zone.
- In the absence of an engineering report on future access to the PZ area, proposed action on the local matter of access to Albert Hall is a blatant case of ‘the tail wagging the dog’. Until the wider context is made clear by thorough analysis, access to Albert Hall can be maintained satisfactorily on the basis of the current road network.

- The NCA must abandon the idea of spending a lot of money ripping out access to the PZ via Flynn and Bowen Drives, only to replace them with limited access to Kings and Commonwealth Avenues.
- The NCA should proceed immediately with the introduction of traffic calming measures along King Edward Terrace, to reduce its present use by through traffic. The whole of this work could be designed and carried out to coincide with the opening of the new Portrait Gallery, a new traffic generator which warrants early action along at least the eastern half of the Terrace.

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