



SUBMISSION29.....

7 March 2003

Mr Ross Lightfoot
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee of the National Capital
and External Territories
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Lightfoot

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the possible introduction of pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone.

The National Gallery of Australia has a keen interest in this subject and is particularly concerned to ensure the needs of visitors, volunteers and staff are carefully considered.

Of paramount importance to us is the needs of our visiting public. As a public institution directed towards providing public access to our building, we are concerned to ensure that barriers to access are minimised or where possible eliminated. At present our visitors are facilitated to park free of charge provided they can find a car space.

Visitors can and do experience difficulty in locating a space in the car parks adjacent to the National Gallery particularly during workdays when a major exhibition is on display. This difficulty occurs because of heavy usage of the car parks by public servants that work nearby, particularly employees of the Department of Finance and Administration, and Department of Environment, situated on the opposite side of King Edward Terrace to the Gallery. The parking spaces in question are currently the subject of a three hour parking restriction which was introduced at the request of the Gallery so that more parking spaces would be available for visitors. Our staff have observed that Departmental staff tend to move their cars in morning tea breaks and at lunchtime, to avoid a parking ticket, and thus the three hour limit may not be an effective deterrent.

We recognise that with the proposed introduction of pay parking in the areas adjacent to the Parliamentary Zone it is important to ensure that demand for parking in the Zone is not increased. To achieve this outcome it is understood and accepted that pay parking within the Zone will be introduced.

In devising a satisfactory system of pay parking, we are concerned to ensure that the needs of visitors are met first and foremost, that the requirements of our more than 150 volunteers are taken into account and preferably that they continue to enjoy free parking, and that the needs of our 270 staff are also carefully considered. We are aware that fringe benefits tax could apply to any discounting arrangements introduced for Gallery staff and we would obviously be concerned to limit the cost implications for staff parking. As expected Gallery staff strongly oppose the introduction of pay parking and are particularly concerned about the economic impact on them of such an initiative. At the very least public transport services to the Parliamentary Zone would need to be improved to encourage fewer cars to enter the Zone.

Another issue for the National Gallery is the control of the parking areas and the beneficiaries of the revenue generated from pay parking. We believe that revenue raised from Gallery patrons and staff, if applicable, should be directed at benefits for Gallery patrons and staff.

Attached is a copy of a paper which summarises our position.

Yours sincerely



Alan Froud
Deputy Director



THE PARLIAMENTARY ZONE PARKING INQUIRY - JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AND EXTERNAL TERRITORIES

NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA POSITION.

Background

The above ground car park located on the north side of King Edward Terrace is not a Gallery controlled car park. The underground car park is controlled by the Gallery.

In recent representations to the ACT Government, and the National Capital Authority, the Gallery has consistently argued that more must be done, in parking terms, to facilitate the needs of visitors to the Gallery, especially Monday to Friday during major exhibitions.

The Gallery has expressed a view to the ACT Government and the National Capital Authority that there is inadequate parking in the zone during major exhibitions, and that such is having an impact on visitor numbers and potentially long term visitor attitude - especially if visitors are unable to find a place to park and/or they are booked for overstayng the three hour limit, or parking illegally.

The Gallery allows entry to its underground car park to staff, volunteers and contractors up to 9.30am on weekdays, and after this time to the general public.

During major exhibitions the Gallery takes possession of the above ground car park in the evening and restricts entry to it until 9.30am (that is ½ an hour before the Gallery's scheduled opening time).

It was at the Gallery's initiative that "three hour" parking limits were introduced for the above ground car park.

Stakeholders

There are a number of parties with an interest in parking at the National Gallery of Australia, including:

- The public who visit the National Gallery of Australia.
- Gallery Members
- Researchers and scholars
- Contractors
- National Gallery of Australia staff
- National Gallery of Australia volunteers and guides
- People visiting the area for a purpose other than to visit the National Gallery of Australia
- Office and other workers in the vicinity of the National Gallery of Australia.

What stakeholders want.

The National Gallery of Australia has not conducted any formal surveys of stakeholders in relation to parking at the Gallery. However, visitors through service charter feedback and in letters and phone calls, have expressed a range of views and opinions on the matter (most often after experiencing difficulties finding a park and/or being booked). Views and opinions expressed include:

- A desire for a guaranteed parking space close to the Gallery.
- To be able to stay as long as they wish.
- A desire not to be fined.

On the matter of paying for parking or not, some visitors have indicated that the Gallery should introduce paid parking, whilst others have indicated they want continued access to free parking.

It could be expected that, if canvassed, most staff and volunteers would advise their preferences as:

- A guaranteed parking space close to the Gallery and not across the road.
- Not to get booked; if they are required to park in the above ground car park for longer than three hours.
- Continued access to free parking.

The National Gallery Of Australia's Position

Visitor Need Takes Precedence

Consistent with the Gallery's philosophy that its purpose is to serve the public, the needs of visitors take precedence.

Weekdays and Weekends and Public Holidays

The review should take into consideration that there should be different policies and practices for the Monday to Friday working week and the weekend/public holiday cases, in recognition of different demand and supply considerations at these times.

Option 1 (Gallery preferred option)

Visitors to the National Gallery of Australia should continue to have access to what is effectively free¹ parking for the duration of their visit, irrespective of whether they are attending to view the permanent collection and other free exhibitions and free events, or visiting to view paid exhibitions and attend paid events.

Staff and volunteers should continue to have access to what is effectively free parking for the duration of periods of duty.

Option 2

Should paid parking be introduced in the Parliamentary Zone and/or adjacent to it, the cost of parking for visitors, staff and volunteers should be minimal in net² terms.

Option 3

The Gallery's least desirable option if paid parking is introduced in the Parliamentary Zone and/or adjacent to it, is that visitors, staff and volunteers pay the full cost of paid parking.

Revenue From The Introduction of Paid Parking

The Gallery would support the introduction of paid parking in its above ground and underground car park if mechanisms could be introduced that generate a revenue source that could desirably achieve the Gallery's preferred position, but as a fall back allow it to effectively subsidise the parking cost for visitors and staff and volunteers.

Notes

The Gallery understands that should paid parking be introduced there would be fringe benefit tax issues to consider if fully or partially subsidised parking were offered to staff.

¹ Free parking could take into account that the cost of parking could be fully offset through such mechanisms as the Gallery validating vouchers for visitors and/or staff and volunteers.

² Net terms could take into account that mechanisms could be introduced and that the cost of parking could be partially offset by such mechanisms as the Gallery validating vouchers for visitors and/or staff and volunteers.

The Gallery appreciates that the above ground car park is a public car park and thus the issues relating to revenue that might be generated from the introduction of paid parking in this car park would be different from those if paid parking were introduced for the underground car park. To this end the Gallery would be interested to explore in the review process the possibility of the Gallery being given rights in respect of the management and use of the above ground car park, consistent with the long term possibility that the area is identified/reserved for the use/benefit of National Gallery of Australia.