

2 June 2013

Inquiry Into Provision of Amenity Within The Parliamentary Triangle

Dear Committee,

I welcome the announcement of this inquiry into what is an important matter for the large number of dedicated APS staff working within the parliamentary triangle. The issue of amenity (and the lack thereof) within this area has been a problem for a long time.

While the government continues to locate its premier central agencies within this small area, it has done so with a complete lack of regard to adequate facilities for these workers. Indeed this lack of amenity can, in part, explain the persistent parking problems that are experienced within the Triangle, for it is the lack of amenity that requires many workers to drive to work because of the need to drive to access basic amenities during the day. The committee will no doubt be familiar with the parking problems that are persisting in the area, as well as the government's recent decision to introduce paid parking in the parliamentary triangle from 1 July 2014. The National Capital Authority maintains that the lack of amenity and the parking issues are unrelated – a view which is grossly mistaken.

While the purpose of this submission is not to complain about the introduction of paid parking, the Committee should be aware that the lack of amenity in the triangle is a contributing factor to the parking problem which has flow on effects for tourism in the parliamentary zone. Many workers, including myself, feel that the introduction of paid parking without the provision of reasonable amenities in this area is not only unfair, but also amounts to an effective pay cut for some of the APS's hardest working staff. It is well known and recognised that Treasury, Finance and PM&C officials work much longer hours than APS staff in other departments.

The adequacy of retail services within the parliamentary triangle is extremely poor. Save for a handful of cafes, it is accurate and fair to say that there are no amenities within the parliamentary triangle. The Treasury and Finance buildings both house their own small cafeterias. The other cafes within the Triangle are located within the national buildings – such as the National Library and the Portrait Gallery. The small number of cafes are often the only choice for the office workers within the Triangle. They have a relative monopoly on the market and as a consequence the pricing structures of these businesses are very high – a ham and salad sandwich and a beverage (a very basic typical lunch) can cost upwards of \$14. Cheaper alternatives can be found in Civic (city) or Manuka but these can only be reached by car and a round trip can often take an hour or more.

Within the Parliamentary zone there are no post office facilities, save for a small shopfront located within Parliament House. This requires one to go through security screening before they can even access the post office. Some cafes do sell stamps but again, at elevated prices. The lack of post office facilities also makes it difficult for one to access the bill paying services which are provided by Australia Post. The nearest post offices are located in Civic and Kingston – again requiring access by

car. Additionally, there are no bank facilities save for the occasional private terminal located within one or two of the cafes. These generally have long lines, are often out of order because they are mobile terminals and have high fees associated with their use.

There is no gym facility located within the Triangle that can be accessed by workers within the Parliamentary Zone. In comparison, workers in Civic have the choice of access to over five different gyms. Many office workers within the Triangle do choose to run at lunch as there are no other alternatives. However, this is difficult during the particularly bitter months of a Canberra winter. Additionally, there is a lack of bike racks in the Triangle. However, some offices do provide this facility at their own expense.

Access to child care facilities is minimal with only a handful of services being run within one or two office buildings. These have long waiting lists and many parents have no alternative but to put their children into care out of the area. The often long distances between parents and their child care options again requires parents to use cars as bus services are slow and their frequency inadequate.

On bus services more generally, there are few options to my place of work – only one bus stops on Langton Crescent. Additionally, as mentioned, the services are slow and infrequent, particularly during the middle of the day. This limits one's ability to use the bus system to access amenities in Civic and Manuka. To travel the 10 kilometres from my house to my place of work (a short distance indeed) it takes twelve minutes by car. If I were to catch a bus, it would take over an hour and 15 minutes and I would be required to change buses and another ten minutes to walk the distance between the bus stops and my residence and place of business. Many people who work within the Triangle would like to use the bus system, but with many working late hours, this is simply not a viable option when services are so poor.

Other amenities not found within the Parliamentary Triangle that would be considered essential services include: a newsagency, hair dresser, doctor's surgery, dentist, chemist and florist. None of these services can be found within the Parliamentary triangle.

The provision of amenities and services within the Triangle is grossly inadequate. In fact it is shameful. To continue to located government departments within this small area while providing no services is a disgrace. Even more, to then impose a paid parking fee in this area without the provision of essential services is criminal. The money collected from this paid parking venture should go towards providing services for the workers who are in desperate need of the most basic amenities, not to consolidated revenue.

I would be happy to speak to the Committee on these matter if further information is required.

Kind Regards,

Miss Shelby A. E Schofield