



Joint Standing Committee on the  
National Capital and External Territories

Submission No: ..... 13 .....

Date Received: ..... 7/04/08 .....

Secretary: .....

To: The Secretary of the joint standing committee on the National Capital and  
External Territories.

Re: Australian Institute of Landscape Architects –  
Submission to the Inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) supports the senate inquiry into the role of the National Capital Authority (NCA) in the planning, development and promotion of the national capital Canberra.

We believe this inquiry is a good opportunity in light of the current planning reforms in the ACT to achieve a more logical and simplified planning regime. In addition, it is opportune to reinforce and reiterate the importance of ensuring that Canberra and the Territory are planned in accordance with their national significance.

AILA would like to make comment with regard to the term of reference as follows:

(a) The administration of the National Capital Plan (NCP) with particular emphasis on the reduction of red tape and duplication of municipal and local planning functions, the jurisdiction of ACT spatial policy and harmonisation of planning systems;

AILA supports the continuing simplification of the planning system with regard to development assessment, procurement and the like, as the ACT government is well equipped to exercise their responsibility in accordance with the National Capital Plan. AILA would support a delineation of land boundaries under exclusive responsibility to the NCA, and land that is under exclusive responsibility to the ACT government. We would also seek consistency of planning controls when land is transferred from Federal to State ownership, which is often the case when federal land is sold for development.

(b) Whether the governance arrangements for the NCA provide a sufficient balance between the independence of the Authority's planning decisions and its accountability for its operations;

AILA believes that the NCA should have statutory powers to review the functions of the ACT government in relation to its responsibilities to the NCP. This should take the form of a timely and regular audit of planning and development activity undertaken by the ACT. However the term of reference for the review should be restricted to activities that impact on the objects of the NCP. This should be a significant function of the NCA as an appointed body to ensure that both the Federal Government and the ACT government adequately fund and administer development activity in relation to their responsibilities to the NCP.

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The NCA and ACTPLA should work together to develop a standardised process for planning and development applications and approvals for lands anywhere in the Territory. There should also be an opportunity available for the ACT Government to review and advise the Federal Government on potential impacts the actions and policies of the NCA have on the ACT Government planning processes and outcomes.

(c) The appropriate level of oversight required to achieve the highest standards in design for areas of national significance;

AILA believes that the NCA should play a role in reviewing and auditing performance of ACT government in relation to the quality of design with specific reference to the NCP. An example would be the recognition of the National Capital Open Space System (NCOSS). The NCP refers to open space in terms such as symbolic spaces and linking spaces that are important descriptors of the function of certain landscapes. Consequently their application in decision making is open to interpretation and should be reviewed and debated from time to time. Equally the nature of the NCP seeks to maintain certain characteristics of the urban landscape. These are not fixed definitions and therefore should be open to independent scrutiny as part of an ongoing debate. An example of such references includes: *Section 2.1 p.73 When arriving in Canberra it is important that the traveller is immediately aware of the special symbolic and functional significance of the National Capital.*

The NCA should maintain a role in reviewing and auditing the performance of the ACT Government in relation to quality of design and development of the certain landscapes perceived as being significant to the National Capital. In addition, there needs to be adequate financial provisions for the planning, design, development and maintenance for these landscape elements of national importance that would normally be beyond the functions of the state government's responsibility.

(d) Opportunities to ensure cooperation with the ACT planning authority and increased engagement with the Canberra community;

AILA believes cooperation with the ACT planning authority can be enhanced through greater clarification of responsibility, and this can be achieved through an amendment to land boundaries as previously mentioned. In addition the NCA currently plays an important role engaging with the Canberra community. Its very presence in the capital is a reminder to the Canberra community that not only is Canberra the Nation's Capital worthy of Federal Government attention in matters of national significance, but also it is a designed city, which is unique in Australia. The NCA's promotion of the capital has extended their resources to complement the Activity of tourism ACT, and as a result plays a significant role in Canberra's national and cultural identity.

The NCA needs to ensure that it actively carries out engagement and consultation with the Canberra community and the wider Australian community on its activities and proposed development projects. In many instances the Canberra community in many ways can act as a voice for the wider Australian community in voicing a public opinion on the activities of the NCA. The Canberra community in the past has exhibited a keen interest and understanding of the qualities and values of the National Capital and this resource should not be overlooked, but should not be the only voice for matters of national significance.

- (e) The effective national promotion of the National Capital, and the roles of the NCA and the ACT Government in advocacy for new infrastructure projects including responsibility for events and developing the distinctive character of the National Capital.

AILA believes a clearer delineation of responsibility, combined with clear statutory powers of review will allow the NCA to not only maintain a third party interest in ACT planning activity, but also act as a conduit to incumbent Federal Governments to advocate on behalf of the ACT for infrastructure development programs. As an appointed body, the NCA can effectively provide expert advice based on the review process to ensure capital works that are of national interest are undertaken strategically and linked to a funding cycle that reflects the NCA's reviewing and auditing function.

We ask the senate committee to take into consideration these comments as part of their inquiry. We would also welcome the opportunity to appear as a witness.

Yours sincerely,



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