

## Submission to the Enquiry into the Role of the National Capital Authority

The National Capital Authority (NCA) has a legislative responsibility to plan and/or manage the central national area and various components of national and designated land.

This responsibility includes the "control" of development at Canberra Airport.

Over the past couple of years, there has been a significant expansion of commercial office space in the Airport precinct, apparently with limited public consultation and no apparent limits on the future quantum of new developments. This office precinct directly competes with commercial office space in Civic and the other town centres. The Airport office park has the great advantage that the land component for office development was originally purchased at a very low price which did not reflect its future commercial use. Accordingly, the rent for commercial space has a competitive advantage over other town centres.

It has been estimated that the Airport has capacity for 200 000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space. This compares with Belconnen Town Centre of 220 000m<sup>2</sup>, Tuggeranong Town Centre of 155 000m<sup>2</sup>, Civic Town Centre of 170 000m<sup>2</sup> and Woden Town Centre of 170 000m<sup>2</sup>.

The rapid expansion of what is essentially a new "Town Centre" at the Airport was never contemplated in the context of the ACT Planning system. In particular, the basis of all ACT infrastructure decisions has been the current y-plan and the existing Town Centres. The "overnight" development of a new Town Centre at the Airport must impose unexpected infrastructure costs on the ACT Government and taxpayer.

The NCA has allowed this to occur with limited public consultation and no apparent detailed control of the overall character and size of the office park.

While I do not doubt that this has all been done within the law, the NCA should be required to explain how this apparent contradiction to the established national capital planning framework has been allowed to occur.

I am also deeply concerned about the NCA's apparent complicity in future retail development at the Airport.

In that context, I have examined the content of the Airport's presentation of 18 August 2003 to the Committee. I was particularly concerned to see that the next stage of the Airport development comprises the development of "Majura Park" which will include a new retail precinct for "bulky goods and homewares". There has, to my knowledge, been absolutely no public consultation about the prospect of a retail component in the Airport development.

Like many commercial investors in Canberra, I have experienced considerable difficulties with the availability and cost of land for retail purposes.

I find it simply astounding that the Airport can apparently create a new retail precinct out of thin air, with no public consultation and no apparent concern about the interests of investors elsewhere.

Once again, the NCA should be required to explain how this has occurred.

While the Commonwealth should retain planning control for the Parliamentary Triangle and some other limited areas of national significance, it should have no planning responsibility for commercial areas such as the Airport, which should be under the control of the ACT Government.

SUBMISSION BY:  
Paul J. Donaghue  
Chairman – Magnet Mart

