

TO the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories

**Inquiry into the Role of the National Capital Authority**

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION

From Brett Odgers 19.9.03

I refer to my written submission dated 23.5.03. This written/verbal submission today specifies what I believe can and needs to be done to overcome major problems.

Developments over the past few months have made these problems starkly manifest and urgent. The ACT continues to demonstrate the success of ACT self government and the ACT Stanhope Government reinforces its claim to be the most progressive in Australia. Whilst the Territory government builds a powerful, professional and democratic new planning and land authority and Canberra takes off as a growing, dynamic and prosperous city, there is a Commonwealth vacuum and the National Capital Authority continues to demonstrate lack of powers, underfunding, undemocratic methods, lapses in values and professional incompetence as planners and public servants.

There are more deep seated problems. The idea of Canberra as the National Capital has withered in the view of the Commonwealth Parliament and authorities generally. There is neither a palpable vision nor an appreciation of what needs to be done to maintain, protect, restore and – most importantly – develop the qualities of the National Capital. Moreover, the basic tasks for government of (1) determining the powers, responsibilities and institutional arrangements and (2) specifying the funding arrangements for the National Capital on a fair, reasonable and transparent basis, have been neglected. Commonwealth authorities other than the NCA have ceased effectively to collaborate or deliver on National Capital objectives, especially land use planning and management, environment and heritage and location of employment.

Resolution of the hiatus requires parity and partnership. The NCA should be restored as a competent planning authority with a fresh set of goals, values, funding and professional resources and partnerships within and between the two spheres of government. It is not necessary to alter the statute book. Adequate governance over these manifest problems can be achieved by policy decisions, protocols, memoranda of understanding, sets of values, principles and guidelines, professionalism, transparency and accountability mechanisms. Resolution of the funding issue requires something more than the established Grants Commission process: a special inquiry and public debate in order to try codifying the basic costs and benefits.

Brett Odgers  
19.9.03

