

## Submission to the Joint Committee on National Capital and External Territories Inquiring into Pay Parking in the Parliamentary Zone

### Introduction

This submission sets out a few of my concerns about this enquiry. A more detailed paper would have been appropriate if time permitted.

On 10 December 2002 the Minister for Regional Services, Territories & Local Government Hon Wilson Tuckey MP, asked the Committee to inquire into Pay Parking in the Parliamentary Zone. The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to make submissions addressing the terms of reference by 7 March 2003.

The terms of reference are as follows:

- The interests of visitors to the Parliamentary Zone;
- The interests of those employed in the Parliamentary Zone and adjacent areas;
- The interests of the national institutions in the Parliamentary Zone;
- Tourism and related issues; and
- Proposed parking policies for Forrest and Barton - areas adjacent to the Parliamentary Zone managed by the ACT Government – and the effects of these policies on parking arrangements in the Parliamentary Zone.

If Governments require their workers to be in the Parliamentary triangle then logically they should provide free parking.

However, before paid parking can be considered, there are significant things that can be done to relieve the current demand on space in the Parliamentary Zone:

1. More access to home based work - Telecommuting
2. Recruitment on a locality basis
3. Consideration about whether departments need to be in the Parliamentary Zone
4. Commitment to public servants if they are required to work in the Parliamentary Zone
5. Better bus timetables
6. Cheaper bus fares

Until the government is prepared to look at other options it is unfair to impose additional costs on workers who have no alternative but to travel to the Parliamentary Zone for work. Many workers would not have chosen to work in the Zone if they knew that they would one day have to pay for parking. Once again, it will be the workers who suffer and the government is not offering any financial incentives to relieve the burden.

The motor vehicle is an accepted mode of transport and a way of life for Australians. It is a privilege for some, convenient for others, luxurious in some cases, comfortable and an expression of our standard of living.

### Issues

- The interests of visitors to the Parliamentary Zone;

Visitors to Canberra are a very important component of Canberra's economy and status as Australia's capital city.

My view is that visitors should not have to pay for parking within areas categorised as 'tourist destinations'.

- The interests of those employed in the Parliamentary Zone and adjacent areas;

Government departments have been placed within the Parliamentary Zone to facilitate the Parliament and politicians. Historically, this proximity was important and cost effective. The requirement for departments to be in close proximity to the Parliament and Parliamentarians remains, albeit to a lesser extent.

My view is that if Governments want their advisers (public servants) in close proximity, then they should provide free parking to them, otherwise departments should be moved to the suburbs or to purpose built areas containing Government departments (outside the Parliamentary Zone) so that staff can commute in cars (or bus) if they so desire.

The majority of staff employed by Commonwealth departments could be moved to suburban centres leaving strategic, and extensively fewer, senior executive staff in close proximity to the Parliament. This will reduce the call on car parking in the Parliamentary Zone as most senior executives have existing underground car parking.

Further, recruitment policies of Departments should change in terms of employing appropriately qualified staff who are within a 'comfortable' commuting distance. For example, where a department in the Parliamentary Zone requires a staff member, the selection process should be rigorous enough to select the applicant who is qualified and closest to the work location. If all departments did this it would reduce the dependence on cars to travel vast distances to work (criss-crossing the Territory) and open up the opportunity for workers to take public transport or indeed a bicycle, ie Centrelink in Tuggeranong would recruit only qualified people from the Tuggeranong or Woden (southside) areas, similarly the Tax Office in Belconnen would recruit qualified people only from the northern suburbs. Shorter Travelling times and less traffic would be significant advantages as well as fewer cars straining the road system, less petrol used, more time at home, etc.

Additionally, Government departments should be told to offer better access to home based work for public servants as part of their working conditions. Currently it is very difficult to access home based work arrangements in my department.

### Summary

It is my view that the introduction of paid parking to the Parliamentary Zone is not necessary at this stage and a timeframe of 5 years should be considered until the next review of the situation, particularly if my suggestions to move departments to outer more accessible areas is taken up by governments. Until the government is prepared to look at other options it is unfair to impose additional costs on workers who have no alternative but to travel to the Parliamentary Zone for work.

Spiro Adamopoulos

