

DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE	
PAPER NO.	4303
DATE	31 AUG 1972
PRESENTED	
<i>J.R. Odgers</i>	
Clerk of the Senate	

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

REPORT ON
PROPOSALS FOR VARIATIONS OF
THE PLAN OF LAY-OUT OF THE
CITY OF CANBERRA AND ITS ENVIRONS
(ITEMS NOS. 11 AND 13 - FORTY-NINTH SERIES)

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY

1. The Committee was appointed for the life of the 27th Parliament by Resolutions of the House of Representatives and the Senate on 25 November 1969. It was first appointed by Resolutions of both Houses of Parliament on 8 November 1956 and re-appointed in succeeding Parliaments.

2. The duties of the Committee are to :

- (a) examine and report on all proposals for modifications or variations of the plan of lay-out of the City of Canberra and its environs published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on the nineteenth day of November 1925, as previously modified or varied, which are referred to the Committee by the Minister for the Interior; and
- (b) examine and report on such other matters relating to the Australian Capital Territory as may be referred to the Committee by the Minister for the Interior.

3.

PERSONNEL OF THE COMMITTEE

Chairman	..	Senator R.G. Withers
Deputy Chairman	..	Mr F.M. Daly M.P.
Members	..	Senator D.M. Devitt
		Senator G.C. Hannan
		Senator C.R. Maunsell
		Senator B.R. Milliner
		Mr K.E. Enderby M.P.
		Mr E.M.C. Fox C.B.E., M.P.
		Mr J.M. Hallett M.P.
Clerk to the Committee	..	Mr D.W. Nairn

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

The Committee is unable to recommend the adoption of the proposed variations to the Plan of lay-out of the City of Canberra contained in Items No.11 and 13 of the Forty-ninth Series of Variations.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN
CAPITAL TERRITORY

Report on the outstanding Items of the Forty-ninth Series of
Variations to the Plan of lay-out of the City of Canberra

Item No.11 - Located in Canberra City
in Section 28 at the site of the old
Canberra High School.

This proposal envisages a road access from
Marcus Clarke Street to the proposed Canberra School of
Music which is to be built on a site located on the existing
playing oval north of the old Canberra High School, adjacent
to the Australian National University.

In our Report on the Forty-ninth Series of
Variations to the Plan of lay-out of the City of Canberra we
reported that we were as yet unresolved on this proposal and
wished to give the matter further consideration and to report
at a later date. We have now discussed this matter further
with the responsible officers of the National Capital
Development Commission, and of the Department of Education
and Science which is the client Department, the Director of
the existing Canberra School of Music, and the
Officer-in-Charge of the Traffic Division, A.C.T. Police.
Our conclusion is that the proposed access road is both
unnecessary and undesirable.

In our view there is already adequate access to the proposed site from University Avenue via the extension off Childers Street. The Committee was told that proposals for development of this area would eventually mean that access through Childers Street would be precluded. If the proposed western expressway construction proceeds according to current plans, Childers Street and the old Canberra High School building will be done away with. This proposal is still at the development stage and its implementation within the period of the next ten years is not foreseen. Meanwhile access through Childers Street will be available. Evidence from the Officer-in-Charge of the Traffic Division, A.C.T. Police, was to the effect that an alternative means of access already exists off Ellery Circuit less disruptive to the traffic flow than the proposed road access off Marcus Clarke Street.

In coming to this conclusion we were influenced by the fact that Marcus Clarke Street and its extension is an extremely busy thoroughfare as it forms part of the existing Canberra ring road. Traffic on this road is likely to increase with the growth of the city. The construction of the Canberra School of Music itself seems likely to generate additional traffic and will create a demand for parking. We were not impressed with the argument that by siting the School in the city centre students of the School would be encouraged to use public transport. Evidence received from both the present

Director of the Canberra School of Music, Mr E. Llewellyn C.B.E., and an officer of the Department of Education and Science was to the effect that both students and staff came to the present School by private transport, and that this pattern was established and likely to continue when the premises were moved to the new site. Many of the users of the School are likely to be children of school age, delivered to and collected from the School by their parents in private vehicles. Older students, in keeping with the modern trend, are likely often to possess and use their own vehicles. There are parking facilities in the vicinity of the proposed access road. It is apparent, however, that to use these parking facilities people must cross the street often at times when very heavy traffic is passing. Inspector McConaghy, the Officer-in-Charge of the Traffic Division, A.C.T. Police, confirmed our impression that this could lead to some danger unless an additional crossing and lights were constructed. If this were done the flow of traffic would be impeded.

Although we have only been asked to examine and report on the proposed road access, we make two further observations. The decision to build the School of Music on this site had been taken both without reference and without any need for reference to the Committee. At the same time it is not really possible for this Committee to evaluate proposals for alterations to the plan of lay-out of the City of Canberra in isolation from the land use

proposals to which they are incidental. For this reason we sought from the Commission and others, their views on the general question of the suitability of this site over alternatives that might have been considered. The National Capital Development Commission, at our request, provided information on the alternative sites that had been considered for the proposed School of Music - a site near the Belconnen Town Centre, east of the College of Advanced Education in an area set aside for Institutions, and a site on Constitution Avenue near Anzac Parade. We have been persuaded that the decision to site the School in the city centre in relationship to the University and other proposed developments relating to the Arts, is the correct one. Siting of the School in this location will add to the vitality of the city centre and be an important cultural and architectural asset. These advantages offset the disadvantages related to traffic flow upon which comment has been made. In the view of the Police Department only slight disruption to the traffic flow will result provided access to the site is made via Childers Street or from Ellery Circuit.

The other matter upon which comment should be made is the fact that this development has been allowed to proceed to the point of a proposed variation to the plan of lay-out of the city apparently without any consultation with the A.C.T. Commissioner of Police and his Department. Furthermore we were told by Inspector McConaghy that it was not usual for the National Capital Development

Commission to consult with the A.C.T. Police Department on matters affecting the flow of traffic arising out of proposals for new development. The Committee was shocked to discover that this was the procedure. The Committee is of the opinion that the police should in future be fully consulted in all appropriate cases. Nor should our comment be restricted to the case of the police. Every effort should be made to consult with other authorities or individuals in any situation where their advice would be of value in planning a proposed development.

Item No.13 - Located at the western end of Russell Defence Offices in the suburb of Campbell.

This proposal to modify the junction of Constitution Avenue, Blamey Crescent and Russell Drive was explained to the Committee as necessary to provide access to car parks on the northern side and behind offices at Russell, and at the same time, to move an earlier proposed road further from residential areas nearby, to the north.

It was explained to the Committee that the road variation was sought to provide traffic at the rear of Russell Offices with access to ancillary adjacent parking of a very extensive scale. Secondly, though of limited extent as yet, this road will ultimately involve a dual carriageway servicing the Russell Offices. This

would, in fact, be the continuation of Constitution Avenue into a road around the rear of these Offices. The existing road in front will then connect to Constitution Avenue at the rear of the Offices.

Such provision appears to the Committee to duplicate the existing access to the rear of Russell Offices and the access provided off Parkes Way.

The Committee shares the growing concern in Canberra at the amount of valuable urban land rendered sterile in parking areas and their approaches. It is understood that about 20 per cent of the urban surface area is given to carriageways. When to this 20 per cent is added for parking areas, there appears to be too great a concession to private vehicle usage. In our view an adequate public transport system would lessen the excessive reliance on private transport for journeys to and from work during regular business hours which is particularly marked in such places as the Russell Defence Offices. Consideration might also be given to the introduction of staggered working hours to relieve congestion on the roads and pressure on the transport system. By doing this, road and parking space could be saved, road accidents reduced, and a more economic use of costly land made possible.

Bold steps should be taken soon to ensure that the traffic situation in Canberra does not get out of control, as has been the unfortunate experience of so many other cities.



R.G. WITHERS
Chairman.

August 1972.