

Heritage

- 4.1 Canberra is more than just a city; it is the ceremonial heart of Australia and is home to some of the nation's most significant institutions and buildings. The Central National Area, and particularly the Parliamentary Zone, is filled with examples of our heritage and national identity. It is essential that the Commonwealth ensures it is preserved for all Australians.
- 4.2 This chapter will consider the potential heritage impacts of the Light Rail Stage 2 project (LRS2) and examine the consultation regarding the project undertaken by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government and National Capital Authority (NCA) to date.

Consultation to date

ACT Government

- 4.3 In May and June 2017, the ACT Government sought feedback from the community to inform the development of the LRS2 project, seeking the community's views on:
- route alignment;
 - stop locations; and
 - other elements of community, cultural or environmental significance.¹
- 4.4 The ACT Government assured the committee that it is committed to an ongoing consultation process with the community, local businesses, educational institutions, and other key precincts and stakeholders including:

1 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 18.

- national cultural institutions and Commonwealth departments within the Barton precinct;
- Woden Town Centre users, such as businesses, customers and public transport patrons;
- residents and representative groups in Barton, Forrest, Deakin, Yarralumla, Curtin, Hughes, Lyons and Woden, such as the Inner South Canberra and Woden Valley Community Councils and aged care facilities such as St Andrews Village;
- Aboriginal groups and individuals, including representatives from the Aboriginal Embassy, Registered Aboriginal Organisations, and the broader Aboriginal community;
- suburban shopping areas, such as Deakin and Curtin Shops;
- educational institutions, such as the Australian National University, Canberra Institute of Technology, and Canberra Girls Grammar School;
- health facilities, including Calvary John James Private Hospital; and
- local peak groups, such as the ACT Property Council, the Canberra Business Chamber and the Public Transport Association of Canberra.²

4.5 The ACT Government advised that the next phase of consultation is expected to commence following the conclusion of the committee's inquiry.³

National Capital Authority

4.6 The NCA explained that it would seek community feedback on the LRS2 project at both the strategic and the works level. It noted that it received strategic feedback from the community regarding rapid transport route alignments (albeit not the mode of transport to be used) during its consultation for the revision of the National Capital Plan in 2016.⁴

4.7 The NCA told the committee that its next stage of public consultation will be at the detailed works level and will follow the receipt of a formal works application from the ACT Government. The Chief Planner at the NCA, Andrew Smith, advised that the NCA would not conduct this stage of public consultation unless it was satisfied that the plan and design of the project were of 'appropriate quality', explaining that:

We'll be looking to understand and take to community comments about which particular materials, where they'll be, clear

2 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 67.

3 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 68.

4 Mr Andrew Smith, Chief Planner, National Capital Authority, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 21 June 2018, p. 20.

identification of loss of trees if that's proposed, new planting, and new safety measures that are proposed for [the project].⁵

- 4.8 Mr Smith advised that the NCA will continue to interact with the ACT Government as it develops the project.⁶

Heritage concerns

- 4.9 A range of concerns regarding the LRS2 project's potential impact on the heritage of the Parliamentary Zone, Parliament House and its vistas, and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge were raised throughout the inquiry. In particular, submissions raised concerns regarding:
- the need for a detailed heritage assessment;
 - the use of overhead wires and poles in Designated Areas and their impact on views of Parliament House and the Parliament House Vista;
 - the appearance of light rail stops, signs, and landscaping; and
 - the removal of trees planted by Charles Weston.

Detailed heritage assessment

- 4.10 The NCA stated that it remains concerned that the LRS2 project to date 'does not adequately demonstrate sensitivity to the importance of the place through which the rail is proposed to travel'. Furthermore, 'it does not appear to have been designed with sufficient understanding of the symbolic, functional, and ceremonial or heritage values that are core to the Central National Area'. The NCA explained that:

The NCA has regularly noted, most recently in correspondence to the ACT Government dated 13 April 2018, the national significance of the area that the proposed light rail project will traverse and expectations that a comprehensive heritage assessment with appropriate mitigation or treatment measures should be the basis of the project. Such assessments are a matter of routine for proponents of projects in the Parliamentary Zone.⁷

- 4.11 The NCA asserted that the proposed route passing through the Parliamentary Zone is a significant heritage issue that will require a full heritage impact assessment to be completed prior to it finalising its view.

5 Mr Andrew Smith, Chief Planner, National Capital Authority, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 21 June 2018, p. 20.

6 Mr Andrew Smith, Chief Planner, National Capital Authority, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 21 June 2018, p. 20.

7 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [1].

It explained that the proposal must be sufficiently advanced as to demonstrate that a safe, barrier-free environment is created with an urban design character that is appropriate to the Parliamentary Zone.⁸

4.12 As noted in Chapter 3, the NCA further advised that the independent heritage assessment, provided by the ACT Government, will need to demonstrate that heritage impacts can be acceptably mitigated for light rail on Commonwealth Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge.⁹

4.13 The NCA commissioned advice from independent heritage advisors, Professor Richard Mackay AM from Mackay Strategic and Adjunct Professor Peter Elliott AM from Peter Elliott Architecture and Urban Design, regarding the LRS2 project. Professor Mackay stressed that the potential impact on places within the Central National Area and their National and Commonwealth heritage values 'should be a key issue in decision-making regarding the light rail project', noting that:

The light rail passes through, adjacent to, or near some of the most important cultural sites in the nation and the light rail project has considerable potential to affect the National, Commonwealth and/or other heritage values of those places. The potential effects include not only physical impacts, but changes to the visual setting of these places, including changes resulting from movable elements, such as light rail carriages.¹⁰

4.14 Professor Mackay also questioned some of the information presented to the committee, especially visualisations and artist impressions of the light rail. He noted that these images show a long-term best-case scenario of the how the light rail might eventually look and may be misleading for decision-makers. He explained that:

The images shown include montages with mature avenues of new trees and are unlikely to depict how the subject section of the light rail project will appear in the period immediately following construction. Well-informed decision-making requires a thorough understanding of the effects of this project...a thorough and reliable heritage impact assessment is required, founded on accurate information, rather than optimistic (and potentially misleading) scenarios.¹¹

4.15 Adjunct Professor Elliott noted that public infrastructure projects of this importance would normally be expected to present a well-researched

8 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [19].

9 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [17].

10 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [8].

11 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [10].

urban design and landscape framework or strategy. He also cautioned that project parameters must be mandated and enforced to ensure that the design and quality presented in the proposal is maintained throughout the project:

Given that the project will be delivered by an industry partnership based on a 'reference design' it is critical to understand how the project parameters will be mandated and enforced. Large infrastructure projects like this have the potential to be watered down or altered as they proceed.¹²

- 4.16 Adjunct Professor Elliott proposed that a Design Review Panel comprising experts in landscape architecture, urban design, architecture, heritage, conservation, transport engineering and planning be established to provide independent advice regarding the project's design values.¹³
- 4.17 Adjunct Professor Elliott also emphasised the value of benchmarking other similar projects, explaining that 'submitting parties should be required to provide a benchmarking study to demonstrate an understanding of best practice through real examples and how that has informed their design thinking'.¹⁴
- 4.18 The ACT Government assured the committee that it is 'acutely aware of the national significance of many locations' along the City to Woden corridor and within the Parliamentary Zone. It advised that a Heritage Management Plan will be included for construction activities and then updated for the start of operations and that 'potential impacts on items of heritage significance will be rigorously assessed under existing legislative provisions'.¹⁵
- 4.19 The ACT Government noted that its preliminary assessment of relevant heritage registers identified 20 heritage listed and nominated items that will be considered during the development of the LRS2 project (see Figure 4.1). It explained that it would engage with the custodians of each of the heritage listings as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process and that the design of the light rail alignment, stops, and other features will be 'carefully managed to respect and enhance the heritage value of these locations'.¹⁶

12 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [14].

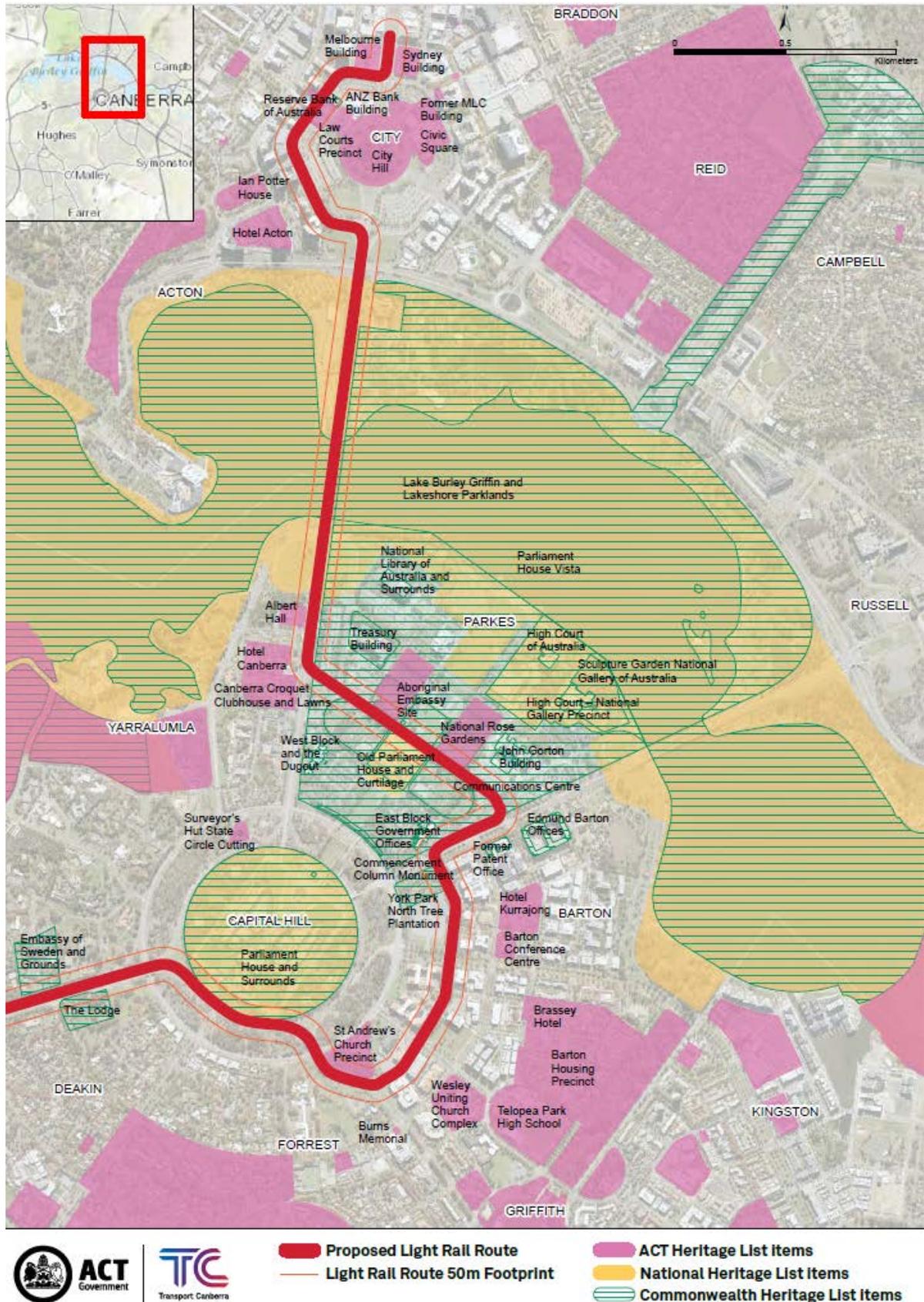
13 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [12].

14 National Capital Authority, *Supplementary Submission 22.2*, p. [13].

15 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, pp. 8, 48-49.

16 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, pp. 8, 48-49.

Figure 4.1 Identified heritage items located near the light rail corridor



Source ACT Government, Submission 25, p. 48.

4.20 The ACT Government told the committee that the implications for heritage places will be determined once detailed assessment requirements are issued from the Department of the Environment and Energy in response to the project's referral under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). It explained that:

The ACT Government is fully aware that the project will result in changes to the area that would be important and notable, particularly given the sensitivity, value and quality of the Central National Area. It is for this reason that the ACT Government expects the project will be a controlled action under the [EPBC Act], and will require a detailed EIS, and ultimately consideration by the Commonwealth Minister for Environment and Energy.¹⁷

4.21 The Commonwealth approvals process is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Underground tunnel

4.22 It was suggested that, similar to commuter rail in Washington DC, an underground tunnel that travels across Lake Burley Griffin and through the Parliamentary Zone could mitigate the impact of light rail on the Parliament House Vista as well as impacts on the heritage and character of these significant areas.¹⁸

4.23 The ACT Government advised that consideration was given to an underground tunnel in the very early planning stages but was dismissed due to the significant cost associated with tunnelling.¹⁹ The ACT Government also noted the differences between the heavy rail of Washington DC's metro network and light rail in the ACT, advising that:

Light rail is a choice made by cities not just as a transport solution but as a combined urban renewal and land use solution as well. You'll note that in Sydney, for instance, they have heavy rail under the ground, but they are investing in light rail above the ground.²⁰

Overhead wires and poles

4.24 A number of submissions cautioned against the use of overhead wires and poles in the Parliamentary Zone and other Designated Areas, asserting that they may negatively impact the aesthetics, character, and heritage of

17 ACT Government, *Supplementary Submission 25.1*, p. 13.

18 *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 August 2018, p. 7.

19 Mr Duncan Edgehill, Deputy Director-General, Transport Canberra, Australian Capital Territory Government, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, Thursday 21 June 2018, p. 7.

20 Ms Emma Thomas, Director-General, Transport Canberra and City Services, Australian Capital Territory Government, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 August 2018, p. 13.

these significant areas.²¹ The Australian Institute of Architects explained that:

It is critically important that the Light Rail route through the Parliamentary Zone is overhead and wire-free with no vertical infrastructure so that it is not impacting upon the Vista of Parliament House, the views of significant buildings within the Parliamentary Zone, and its overall visual amenity.²²

4.25 The ACT Government advised the committee that LRS2 will utilise both overhead wires and poles and wire-free running along the proposed route alignment. The current proposed alignment features wire-free running from Alinga Street to Sydney Avenue, and again in Woden from the Phillip Oval stop to the Woden Town Centre (see Figure 4.2).

4.26 The NCA told the committee that it has advised the ACT Government that these designs are not consistent with the previously stated requirement that the LRS2 route within Designated Areas be entirely wire-free.²³ The Chief Executive Officer of the NCA, Sally Barnes, told the committee that the NCA would prefer the wire-free section of the route to continue along Adelaide Avenue:

...Adelaide Avenue is an important avenue in that it's also linked to the Lodge and to the Governor-General's residence. For visiting dignitaries and just the look and feel of that area we would prefer Adelaide Avenue to be wire-free.²⁴

21 For example: Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission 40*; National Capital Authority, *Submission 22*; Ms Dione Smith, *Submission 29*; Deakin Residents Association, *Submission 18*; Inner South Canberra Community Council, *Submission 26*; Griffith-Narrabundah Community Association, *Submission 9*; Dr John Smith, *Submission 8*; Lake Burley Griffin Guardians, *Submission 6*; Mr Duncan Marshall and Dr Michael Pearson AO, *Submission 12*; Farrer Residents Association, *Submission 30*.

22 Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission 40*, p. 2.

23 National Capital Authority, *Submission 22*, p. 16.

24 Ms Sally Barnes, Chief Executive Officer, National Capital Authority, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 21 June 2018, pp. 17-18.

Figure 4.2 Overhead line power and wire-free running locations



 **ACT** Government |  **T/C** Transport Canberra

 Proposed Light Rail Route |  Wire free running |  Light rail stop

Source ACT Government, Submission 25, p. 52.

- 4.27 Mr Harold Guida, a Moral Rights Holder for Parliament House, emphasised the importance of ensuring that wires and poles do not impact the views of Parliament House from the surrounding areas:

...through the parliamentary area and all the way, I would hope, to Adelaide Avenue, the system would be wire-free so that we don't have anything crossing the views of the parliament from any of the vantage points within the parliamentary area...if we don't have the system wire-free until we get to Adelaide Avenue, you'll see the mast through the drooping wires or whatever it might be.²⁵

- 4.28 The Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) also expressed concerns regarding the return to overhead wires and poles at Sydney Avenue and the impact this will have on views of Parliament House and St Andrew's Church from Canberra Avenue:

...significant vehicular, and some pedestrian traffic, heading west on Canberra Avenue, would view the [Parliament House] flag mast and the spire of St Andrew's church through the lateral crossing of wires and their support posts.²⁶

- 4.29 The ACT Government told the committee that it is continuing to negotiate with the NCA, 'seeking to determine an acceptable outcome for the precise extent of wire-free operations'.²⁷ It explained that some use of wires and poles within Designated Areas may be unavoidable due to the limitations of the available technology:

Due to the curves and gradient, traffic intersections, and the distance between the stops, the Sydney Avenue to Hopetown Circuit section may require more energy than can currently be stored on board the LRVs [Light Rail Vehicles] using technology available today.²⁸

Appearance of light rail stops, signs and landscaping

- 4.30 AIA highlighted the importance of ensuring that light rail stops in the Parliamentary Zone do not negatively impact the heritage of the area and surrounding buildings:

If the proposed Parliamentary Zone stops are used for high usage/daily commutes, there will be a reasonable call for (winter/summer/rain/sun/night) shelters/buildings with the

25 Mr Harold Guida, Parliament House Moral Rights Holder, Guida Moseley Brown Architects, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 August 2018, p. 1.

26 Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission 40*, p. 2.

27 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 51.

28 ACT Government, *Supplementary Submission 25.1*, pp. 28-31.

expected aspects of roof, support structure, walls, seating, signage, etc...Further, the architecture of the stops (shelter/seating/lighting/information) will be of significance.²⁹

- 4.31 AIA also cautioned against prioritising consistency of stop design along the route over ensuring that heritage is not adversely impacted in the Parliamentary Zone:

While it is often the case that stop structures are consistent in design along a light rail route for ease of identification/branding, the Parliamentary Zone might require more design consideration in terms of stops' placement, form, scale, materials, lighting and signage.³⁰

- 4.32 The ACT Government assured the committee that the 'landscaping surrounding each stop has been carefully considered to allow for tailored design solutions that respect and enhance the local environment and heritage value'. It advised that it is looking to examples of international best practice to guide its design approach, particularly to inform the design of the proposed stop located in front of the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD), commonly referred to as Old Parliament House.³¹
- 4.33 The ACT Government raised the example of light rail that passes in front of the Place de la Bourse in Bordeaux, France, where 'the stop surface is integrated into the fabric of the square and it has no canopy to obscure view lines'. It advised that 'this type of approach is planned for the MoAD light rail stop to reflect its iconic location'.³²
- 4.34 The AIA agreed that the Bordeaux example was elegant, but questioned its applicability to the MoAD stop, noting that '[Place de la Bourse stop] is incorporated within a plaza fronting a passing street and is not part of a city-wide landscape visual axis'.³³

Weston plantings

- 4.35 Some submissions raised concerns regarding the removal of trees planted by Charles Weston, an Australian horticulturalist who was responsible for the afforestation of Canberra in collaboration with the Griffins, along the

29 Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission 40*, p. 3.

30 Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission 40*, p. 3.

31 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 34; ACT Government, *Supplementary Submission 25.1*, pp. 13-14.

32 ACT Government, *Submission 25*, p. 34.

33 Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission 40*, p. 3.

proposed route.³⁴ The Chief Planner at the NCA, Andrew Smith, explained the heritage significance of the trees:

For heritage assessment there is a process, a rigour, to it that basically identifies the significance of the object... In the case of the plantings... Weston was a significant person in the early days of the national capital. By virtue of being associated with him, they become important... in terms of the original design character of the city they become important. Through association with the Griffin design of the city, they're a particular marker of that, so they are important... they are of heritage significance.³⁵

4.36 Dr John Gray OAM, a retired fellow of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, raised concerns that the ACT Government has not provided a detailed report regarding the proposed removal and replacement of the Weston plantings along the proposed LRS2 route alignment for public consultation:

The community react unfavourably when chainsaws make their presence known without adequate prior consultation... Generally speaking Canberra citizens can be convinced that tree removals are justified if they are told in a report why there is need to do so and the Government reveals in detail how this will be done.³⁶

4.37 Dr Gray emphasised the importance of minimising the visual impact of the loss of trees by planting replacement trees at least a year before the removal of existing trees. He noted that this did not take place for the removal and replacement of trees along Northbourne Avenue for Stage 1 of the light rail:

The existing suitable trees [on Northbourne Avenue] were instead clear felled before rail construction commenced and the replacement trees will be planted later with unsuitable species. The avenue landscape will thus take many years to recover... the highly significant main entrance route into the National Capital will thus remain unattractive for many years to come.³⁷

34 For example: Lake Burley Griffin Guardians, *Supplementary Submission 6.1*; Dr John Gray OAM, *Submission 41*.

35 Mr Andrew Smith, Chief Planner, National Capital Authority, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 August 2018, p. 7.

36 Dr John Gray OAM, *Submission 41*, p. 2.

37 Dr John Gray OAM, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

Committee comment

- 4.38 The importance of preserving the heritage and character of the Central National Area and the Parliamentary Zone cannot be overstated. The committee supports the ongoing development and improvement of amenities in Canberra, but progress must never be prioritised over the protection of the nation's most significant areas, institutions, and buildings.
- 4.39 The committee notes the NCA's concerns that the LRS2 project to date has not adequately demonstrated sensitivity to the importance of the Central National Area or Parliamentary Zone. Furthermore, as discussed in previous chapters, the proposed route alignment is partially inconsistent with the National Capital Plan. The committee supports the NCA's requirements regarding the provision of a full heritage assessment prior to the NCA finalising its view on the proposed route alignment.
- 4.40 The committee also supports the NCA's requirement that the ACT Government provide an independent heritage assessment that demonstrates that heritage impacts can be acceptably mitigated for light rail on Commonwealth Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge.
- 4.41 The committee acknowledges the ACT Government's proposal for wire-free running and agrees that this would mitigate the impact of overhead wires and poles. It also understands the current limitations of the proposed wire-free technology and the challenges of making the sections of LRS2 that pass through Designated Areas entirely wire-free. Nonetheless, the committee is concerned that the ACT Government does not appear to be heeding the advice of the NCA with regard to this matter.
- 4.42 The committee supports the NCA's view that the LRS2 route within Designated Areas should be entirely wire-free. The use of overhead wires and poles around Parliament House and along Adelaide Avenue to Kent Street is an unacceptable impact on the heritage and aesthetics of Parliament House and the Designated Areas.

Recommendation 4

4.43 **The committee recommends that the Parliament require any light rail on, or crossing:**

- **Commonwealth Avenue;**
- **Kings Avenue;**
- **State Circle;**
- **Brisbane Avenue;**
- **Sydney Avenue;**
- **Canberra Avenue (to Manuka Circle);**
- **Hobart Avenue;**
- **Melbourne Avenue;**
- **Adelaide Avenue (to Kent Street);**

and in the Parliamentary Zone, be wire-free.

4.44 At this stage, there is little information regarding the design and appearance of light rail stops, signs, and landscaping within the Parliamentary Zone. The committee acknowledges the artist impressions that the ACT Government has provided. However, more detailed information is necessary to form a view.

4.45 The committee is of the view that the ACT Government should prioritise complementing the heritage and character of the Central National Area, and particularly the Parliamentary Zone, over providing consistency of design along the route when designing light rail stops, landscaping and signage.

Recommendation 5

4.46 **The committee recommends that Parliament require the placement and appearance of light rail stops, landscaping, and signage to be unobtrusive and complementary to the heritage value of nearby buildings, views of Parliament, and the character of the Central National Area and Parliamentary Zone.**

- 4.47 The committee understands that the removal of some trees planted by Charles Weston is necessary for LRS2 to travel along the median of Commonwealth Avenue. Nonetheless, it is important that the visual impact of the loss of trees is minimised and their heritage value is taken into consideration when developing the removal, replanting and landscaping strategy.

Recommendation 6

- 4.48 **The committee recommends that Parliament require that the removal of any trees with heritage value, such as the Weston plantings, be met with an appropriate replanting and landscaping strategy that maintains heritage values in the Central National Area and the Parliamentary Zone.**

Mr Ben Morton MP
Chair

18 October 2018

