



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

Ms Peggy Danaee
Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Danaee

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSED STAGE 2 OF THE ACT LIGHT RAIL

On behalf of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) and in conjunction with my colleagues in the Department of the House of Representatives and the Department of the Senate, I welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposed Stage 2 of the ACT Light Rail and its impact on the Parliamentary Zone. The submission neither endorses nor criticises the proposed Stage 2 of the ACT Light Rail but rather comments on the impact on Australian Parliament House (APH) and the Parliamentary Zone.

National importance of the Parliamentary Zone and our National capital

The national importance of the Parliamentary Zone and our National Capital is recognised in the citation for the Parliament House Vista which is on the Commonwealth Heritage List established under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity (EPBC) Act 1999*. The Parliament House Vista is a large area located in the central part of Canberra which includes the Parliamentary Zone, the central basin of Lake Burley Griffin, Anzac Parade and the Australian War Memorial. The Parliamentary Zone is the symbolic heart of the National Capital and is at the geometric centre of the Griffin plan for Canberra. Parliament House on Capital Hill, directly above Old Parliament House, sits at the apex of the Parliamentary Zone. The National Capital Plan describes Canberra's Parliamentary Zone as:

... the physical manifestation of Australian democratic government and the home of the nation's most important cultural and judicial institutions and symbols.

Access to APH

Enhanced transportation to the parliamentary precincts will benefit the staff that support the work of the parliament and public servants from government agencies in Barton and Woden that regularly conduct business at APH, as well as tourism based visitors.

Approximately 2,500 people work in APH on a daily basis and the building welcomes around 800,000 visitors per year, including 140,000 school students. Data is not readily available on the number of visits by agency staff to APH but it is anticipated that transportation links between Barton and Capital Hill would provide significant advantages for accessibility and parking. A well-considered Stage 2 Light Rail could:

- facilitate easier access to APH for both those with business and tourism purpose
- reduce reliance on cars and the corollary demand on parking and
- ease traffic congestion in the Parliamentary Zone during peak periods.

The benefits of the Light Rail to the Parliamentary Zone would be further enhanced by integrating the route and stops with other transport modes—such as buses along with bicycle and pedestrian paths—to provide for a more holistic transport approach in support of the core principle of the Parliamentary Zone as ‘the place of the people’¹.

Substantively route Options 1a and 1b (with a proposed stop on Federation Mall), present the greatest advantage to APH from a transportation service perspective, however it is noted that community survey responses prefer Option 2b.

The proposed stops closest to APH in Option 2b are near Sydney Avenue on the south-east side and on the northern side of Old Parliament House (OPH). It is a generally accepted transport planners’ ‘rule of thumb’ that people will walk approximately 400 metres (or 5 minutes) to access transport. Both of the current proposed stops are well in excess of 400 metres from APH. The route from King George Terrace in front of Old Parliament House represents the safest and most straightforward means of access to the main entrance of APH and it is approximately a distance of 800 metres. This distance will discourage use of light rail for many potential users.

If the route were to continue on to State Circle rather than Capital Circle, the possibility arises for a stop at the intersection with Melbourne Ave. This represents a distance of approximately 350 metres to the rear entrance of APH. Noting this would not an optimal location for tourists, it would certainly serve the needs of the resident working population of APH and those visiting the building for business. It will be essential to develop and maintain safe, well-lit pedestrian access from the stop to APH to ensure the safety of staff when working late hours, which is often the case during sitting weeks.

As a final point regarding transportation, the chosen route should aim to limit traffic disruption to Parliament Drive both during and after construction. Consideration must be given to the potential impacts on the significant traffic flow accessing Parliament Drive from Commonwealth Ave, Kings Ave, Federation Mall and Melbourne Ave. In particular it is critical during sitting weeks that parliamentarians, the resident working population of APH, the APH loading dock and those visiting the building are not hindered from attending to parliamentary business.

Amenity impact of proposed option

Overhead wires and support structures will have an adverse impact on views of significant buildings and landscape elements within the Parliament House Vista. These structures must be avoided within the Parliamentary Zone.

Construction may have an impact on landscaping and treescapes, given the required clearances for access to infrastructure will involve removal of significant trees along the route. It should be noted that tree planting in the Parliamentary Zone has been used to reinforce the geometry of Griffin’s plan. For example, Old Parliament House (OPH) and APH are linked along the main land axis in the Griffin Plan by a land-bridge defined by means of linear and directional tree planting. The tree groupings are a thoughtfully designed visual and spatial device which frames views along the axis to reinforce the important symbolic relationship between OPH and APH and to encourage pedestrian movement between the two buildings. On this basis, it is important that existing treescapes are carefully considered in planning the route and design of this infrastructure.

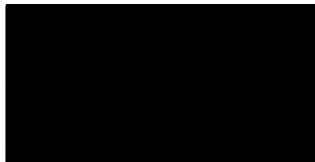
¹ National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report – March 2000*.

The section of the route that runs along Capital Circle may impinge on views of APH from the south, and could affect traffic flows and pedestrian safety. Construction of the proposed route may require changes to the landscape ring or “bosques” between Capital and State Circles. It is important that the integrity of this landscape area be maintained as a series of recreational zones consistent with the design intent of APH and which is often used by, walkers, joggers, cyclists and general use by the public. These issues would be avoided if the route instead continued along State Circle.

The DPS works closely and respectfully with the administrators of Mr Romaldo Giurgola’s moral rights in the design of APH and its landscape – Ms Pamille Berg AO Hon. FRAIA and Mr Hal Guida LFRAIA. Any change to the landscape surrounding APH should include consultation in good faith with Ms Berg and Mr Guida. I would be pleased to facilitate any consultation process should it be necessary.

I would welcome the opportunity to provide further comment if required.

Yours sincerely



Rob Stefanic
Secretary

15 June 2018