

Introduction

The Parliamentary Zone

“The Parliamentary Zone will be given meaning as the Place of the People, accessible to all Australians so that they can more fully understand and appreciate the collective experience and rich diversity of this country.” – National Capital Plan.

- 1.1 Walter Burley Griffin’s plan for Canberra was designed to reflect the values of an emerging nation¹ and includes that which has come to be known as the National Triangle. The southern apex of the triangle, known as the Parliamentary Zone, is described in the National Capital Plan as “the physical manifestation of Australian democratic government and home of the nation’s most important cultural and judicial institutions and symbols”.² The institutions within the Zone represent the Australian people, their values and achievements.³ In general terms, the Parliamentary Zone includes the Parliament House site within Capital Circle and extends to the land lying east of Commonwealth Avenue and west of Kings Avenue to Lake Burley Griffin, and the land south of Lake Burley Griffin lying between the two avenues.

1 National Capital Authority, *Consolidated National Capital Plan*, February 2002, p 285.

2 National Capital Authority, *Consolidated National Capital Plan*, February 2002, p 29.

3 John Lauder, Submissions, p 132.

- 1.2 The Parliamentary Zone covers a total area of 1,081,048 square metres, approximately 14 per cent of which is taken up by surface parking and 5.6 per cent of which is taken up by buildings. These buildings include the national institutions which consist of Reconciliation Place, Commonwealth Place, the National Gallery of Australia, the High Court of Australia, the National Science and Technology Centre, Old Parliament House and the National Portrait Gallery, the National Library of Australia and the National Archives of Australia⁴. The Parliamentary Zone is also home to three other buildings which are occupied by Commonwealth agencies. The John Gorton Building houses the Department of the Environment and Heritage and the Department of Finance and Administration. The Treasury Building is home to the Department of the Treasury and the National Capital Authority. The West Block offices are occupied by the Australian Electoral Commission, the Australian Protective Service and some employees from Parliamentary Departments.
- 1.3 Many of the sites and buildings within the Parliamentary Zone appear on the Register of the National Estate which is maintained by the Australian Heritage Commission. Registration has legal status under the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 (Cth)*. Parliament House and Old Parliament House are central to the Parliamentary Vista which is listed on the Register. Other sites of heritage significance include Old Parliament House and its Curtilage, the National Rose Gardens, the King George V Memorial, the Commencement Column Monument, the Capital Circle Geological Unconformity, East and West Blocks, the John Gorton Building, the National Library of Australia and surrounds, and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.⁵

Planning Responsibility

- 1.4 The responsibility for the planning, design, development and land management of the Parliamentary Zone rests with the Commonwealth of Australia. Section 5(b) of the *Parliament Act 1974 (Cth)* provides that no works are to be undertaken on land within the Parliamentary Zone unless:

...the Minister has caused a proposal for the erection of the building or work to be laid before each House of the

4 The National Archives of Australia is located in the East Block Offices.

5 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 83.

Parliament and the proposal has been approved by resolution of each House.⁶

- 1.5 The National Capital Plan (the Plan), which came into effect in 1990, is the major statutory document that outlines the Commonwealth's intentions for the development of the national capital. The Plan is established under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 (Cth)* (the Act). In the Parliamentary Zone, the National Capital Authority (NCA) is responsible for works approvals for all building and landscape projects, and for planning and management of public land, including services and public events.
- 1.6 The NCA is also responsible for enhancing and maintaining the character of the Parliamentary Zone. It does this by undertaking a range of ongoing projects which include commemorative works, parks, gardens, tree plantings, fountains, paths, jetties, signage, lighting and car parks. Section 1 of the Plan provides that developments in the Parliamentary Zone "should be sited and designed to support the prominence of national functions and reinforce the character of the area".⁷

Designated Area

- 1.7 The Central National Area which includes the Parliamentary Zone and its setting, is specified as a *Designated Area* under the provisions of the Act.⁸ Section 10.2 of the Act provides that the National Capital Plan "may set out the detailed conditions of planning, design and development in Designated Areas and the priorities in carrying out such planning design and development."⁹ In section 1.4, the Act also provides for the transport system within the Parliamentary Zone to be planned in accordance with the significance of the area:

The transport system within the Designated Area will be planned and managed for volumes of traffic and parking consistent with the significance and use of the Area.

Transport infrastructure should foster the use of transport systems which minimise adverse effects from vehicular traffic.¹⁰

6 *Parliament Act 1974 (Cth)*, Section 5.

7 National Capital Authority, *Consolidated National Capital Plan*, 2001, p 29.

8 National Capital Authority, *Consolidated National Capital Plan*, p 23.

9 *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 (Cth)*, Section 10.

10 National Capital Authority, *Consolidated National Capital Plan*, 2001, p 32.

Table 1.1 Car Park Provision in the Parliamentary Zone

| Building/Place | Long-stay (includes motor cycles and basement parking) | Commonwealth Vehicles/ Reserved Parking/ Parking for People with Disabilities | Loading Zone | Short-stay | Total |
|----------------------|--|---|-----------------|------------|--------------|
| National Library | 266 | 18 | 0 | 55 | 339 |
| Questacon | 370 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 372 |
| High Court | 40 | 93 | 0 | 18 | 151 |
| National Gallery | 172 | 17 | 6 | 197 | 392 |
| John Gorton Building | 874 | 90 | 0 | 9 | 973 |
| Treasury Building | 647 | 93 | 4 | 24 | 768 |
| West Block | 393 | 33 | 2 | 4 | 432 |
| Old Parliament House | 184 | 8 | 3 | 50 | 245 |
| East Block | 409 | 15 | 0 | 29 | 453 |
| Federation Mall | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 56 |
| On-street | 84 | 17 | 6 | 267 | 374 |
| Totals | 3,495 | 386 | 21 | 653 | 4,555 |

Source National Capital Authority, Submission, March 2003.

Table 1.2 Employee Levels and Parking Rate in the Parliamentary Zone

| Building | Employees* (estm) | Total Long-Stay Parking | Space/ Employee | Av. Daily Rate of Use (%)** |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| National Library | 450 | 494 | 1.09 | 70 |
| Questacon | 80 | 158 | 1.97 | 87 |
| High Court | 100 | 133 | 1.33 | 65 |
| National Gallery | 200 | 189 | 0.94 | 60 |
| John Gorton Building | 1,200 | 964 | 0.80 | 92 |
| Treasury Building | 1,200 | 737 | 0.61 | 89 |
| Old Parliament House | 100 | 192 | 1.92 | 67 |
| West Block | 300 | 426 | 1.42 | 58 |
| East Block | 180 | 424 | 2.35 | 60 |
| Totals | 3,810 | 3,291 | 1.38 (avge) | |

Source National Capital Authority, Submission, August 2003.

* Approximate numbers mid 2002 – excludes Parliament House

** Datacol Research Pty Ltd – *Parliamentary Zone Parking Survey Report, 2003*

Parking Availability

- 1.8 Table 1.1 shows the current provision for parking at each of the major buildings in the Parliamentary Zone, indicating the supply of both the short term parking for visitors and long term parking for employees. The total number of parking spaces in the Parliamentary Zone is 4,555. Approximately 14 per cent of these have been allocated as short-stay parking.

Employee / Visitor Numbers

- 1.9 Employment in the Parliamentary Zone, excluding Parliament House, is estimated at 3,810 employees. Table 1.2 shows the division of employment within the Zone, as of mid 2002, and the extent to which parking is provided for these employees. The information provided by the NCA shows that both the Treasury Building and the John Gorton Building have a significantly low ratio of parking spaces to employees. The data also suggests that while some areas of employment in the Zone are clearly struggling to accommodate the demand for parking, there are other areas – such as East and West Blocks – where there is parking space that is not being utilised.

Issues

- 1.10 There are a range of issues relating to parking in the Parliamentary Zone which have become a matter of public concern. This was evident to the Committee during an inspection of the parking areas in the Zone undertaken on 16 September 2002. The issues include traffic flow problems, limited car parking spaces, physical isolation of major buildings and attractions and a poor pedestrian access network. It is anticipated that without action, these problems are likely to deteriorate given the plans for future development within the Zone and the prediction that visitor numbers are likely to increase substantially. The intended long term growth and development of the Zone is identified in the Indicative Development Plan which has been incorporated into the National Capital Plan as part of Draft Amendment 33.

Draft Amendment 33: Parliamentary Zone Review

- 1.11 In 1998, having identified the need to address the issues confronting the Zone, the Federal Government commissioned the NCA to undertake a strategic review and to initiate the development of a master plan for the Parliamentary Zone. The review process included

Figure 1.1 Existing Public Parking in Parkes/Barton



Source National Capital Authority, 2003.

a statement of critical issues and consultation with key stakeholders, professional bodies and focus groups and was carried out with the assistance of a Parliamentary Zone Advisory Panel.¹¹

1.12 In March 2000, the NCA published the review as the *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report* with an aim to “refresh and promulgate the historical vision for the Zone and to provide innovative and practical ways of translating this vision into reality”.¹² Key results from the report were incorporated into a master plan for the Parliamentary Zone by way of Amendment 33 to the National Capital Plan which came into effect on 17 September 2001.¹³ The master plan is intended to guide decisions relating to development, cultural and physical planning and management within the Parliamentary Zone. The master plan contains:

- a statement of principles that the Parliamentary Zone will be given meaning as ‘the place of the people’, accessible to all Australians so that they can more fully understand and appreciate the collective experience and rich diversity of this country;
- a statement of objectives and intentions which includes to welcome people and make access easy and open;
- statements of policy relating to the formation of campuses, land use and development, roads and traffic, pedestrian pathways, orientation and interpretation and tree planting; and
- an indicative development plan.¹⁴

1.13 The aims of the proposed parking initiatives as identified in the NCA’s review are to improve the experience of visitors to the Parliamentary Zone by creating convenient and safe parking areas, balancing parking demand and supply and reducing the use of motor vehicles within the Zone.¹⁵ The initiative is also focused toward applying more ecologically sustainable management and development practices which would contribute to a ‘greener’ Zone.¹⁶

1.14 Traffic and parking problems in the Parliamentary Zone are not a new issue and have been on the NCA’s agenda for some time. For over a decade, the NCA and its predecessor, the National Capital Planning

11 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 90.

12 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p iii.

13 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 90.

14 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 91.

15 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 40.

16 National Capital Authority, *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, March 2000, p 40.

Authority (NCPA), have sought to manage traffic and parking in the Parliamentary Zone through a variety of measures in conjunction with the ACT Government. These include the introduction of limited on-site parking, the introduction of parking contributions to a centralised parking trust fund, reducing supply by the development of surface car parks and restricting on-street car parking.¹⁷ The Authority concluded that pay parking was an essential element of any long-term solution to the parking demands in the Parliamentary Zone and put this view to the Committee in 1994.

1994 Inquiry: The First Proposal for Pay Parking in the Parliamentary Zone

1.15 In 1994, the Committee undertook to inquire into a proposal from the NCPA to have a paid voucher parking system installed in the Parliamentary Zone. The intention of the proposal was to generate revenue to offset the cost of the NCPA's four year Restoration and Replacement Program for National Capital Assets. The then Committee recommended that Parliamentary approval not be granted for the proposed works and that alternative means of funding be investigated¹⁸, citing the following reasons:

- that the revenue targets were unlikely to be met without imposing unrealistic charges on people parking within the Zone;
- that there was no guarantee that funds raised from parking charges in the Zone would continue to be spent on National Capital assets after the four year Program;
- that insufficient attention had been paid to the likely effects of pay parking on national institutions such as decreasing visitor numbers, the operations of Fringe Benefits Tax and the impact on volunteer staff;
- that there was no guarantee that improved public transport links would be created to ensure an adequate service into the Zone at peak periods; and
- that insufficient attention had been paid to the lack of commercial and community services within the Zone.¹⁹

17 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 120.

18 A dissenting report was tabled by Senator Mal Colston who disagreed with the recommendation that Parliamentary approval not be granted for the installation of voucher parking machines and associated signs in the Parliamentary Zone.

19 Report of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital & External Territories, *The Proposal for Pay Parking in the Parliamentary Zone*, June 1994, p 26.

NCA Parking Policy for the Parliamentary Zone

1.16 In June 2002, prior to the inquiry commencing, the NCA presented a submission to the Committee which included the Authority's policy for the management of parking in the Parliamentary Zone.²⁰ This submission addressed the issues arising from the *Parliamentary Zone Review Outcomes Report*, and outlined the NCA's strategy for the management of parking in the Zone. The strategy included the provision of centralised parking structures which would incorporate a range of amenities and the provision of basement parking for new buildings to accommodate parking needs. However, the Authority acknowledged that in keeping with sustainable practice there is a need to "aim for a reduction in the overall rate of provision of parking and for improved public transport facilities".²¹ The NCA's policy for the management of parking in the Zone, as outlined in this original submission, involved the following components:

- there is to be a charge for off-street parking throughout the Zone on a differential basis to maximise the number of spaces made available for visitors to institutions and to avoid these spaces being occupied by commuters;
- parking necessary for operational needs for each institution and facility is to be dedicated near that institution or facility;
- as new development occurs on areas currently used for surface parking there will be spaces provided in centralised parking areas for displaced cars;
- a shuttle bus system is proposed to operate in the Zone for improved access by providing a connection between the parking areas and attractions;
- parking areas are to be provided with upgraded lighting to improve safety; and
- one fee for long stay parking areas will enable movement into and out of the area throughout the day and use of the shuttle bus for the single charge.²²

20 This original submission was the basis for the Committee resolving to conduct an inquiry. Once the inquiry began, the NCA made a second submission to the Committee on 7 March 2003. This second submission "outlines the strategic objectives for the Parliamentary Zone, the current issues associated with access and car parking, and in particular the case for the introduction of pay parking", National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 89.

21 National Capital Authority, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories: Parliamentary Zone Parking Policy*, June 2002, p 5.

22 National Capital Authority, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories: Parliamentary Zone Parking Policy*, June 2002, p 1.

- 1.17 The reasons the NCA identified for the need to introduce pay parking include:
- there is an excessive amount of surface parking in the Zone;
 - off-site parking demand is intended to be met by centralised parking areas that will need to be funded through parking charges;
 - pay parking will allow for better management in terms of meeting different requirements of commuters and visitors through the use of differential parking rates;
 - taking into account the hierarchy of roads and campus structures that are proposed for the Zone, pay parking will make it possible to achieve a better integration of traffic movement through a generally centralised parking arrangement; and
 - the introduction of parking charges will deter use of the Zone by commuters in the adjacent Barton/Forrest area seeking alternative parking spaces.²³

ACT Developments

- 1.18 The NCA's proposal has been developed in conjunction with the Territory Government's policy to promote sustainable transport options for the ACT. Parking is recognised as an important component of the ACT's strategy and any parking policies adopted by the Commonwealth in the Parliamentary Zone are likely to have implications for the Territory's transport strategy.
- 1.19 Pay parking already exists in Civic and Woden town centres, as well as in suburbs such as Deakin, Dickson, Kingston and Manuka. The ACT Government also plans to introduce pay parking in Belconnen and Tuggeranong town centres in the near future. According to the Territory Government, "the availability of parking spaces is the key factor influencing modal choice and encouraging people to always use their cars".²⁴ The ACT's *Sustainable Transport Plan* involves the implementation of pay parking consistently across the metropolitan areas of Canberra.

23 National Capital Authority, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories: Parliamentary Zone Parking Policy*, June 2002, p 2.

24 ACT Government, *Submissions*, p 314.

1.20 In 2002, the ACT Government advised that it would introduce pay parking in the Barton/Forrest office area. In order to avoid an unwanted overflow of commuters, the Territory and the National Capital Authority recognised the need to align the introduction of pay parking between the Barton/Forrest area and the Parliamentary Zone.²⁵ Officers of the ACT Government worked in collaboration with the NCA and developed an outline of a parking management plan for the Barton area and the Parliamentary Zone. According to the ACT, the plan takes a comprehensive approach to parking management in the area and includes:

- integrated management of public on-street and off-street parking in Government buildings and institutions;
- implementation of pay parking;
- provision for time restrictions and physical barriers to control illegal parking;
- management and enforcement measures and protocols; and
- controls on on-site parking provision for new developments.²⁶

1.21 The NCA and the ACT Government have emphasised the need for a joint approach to ensure effective implementation of the parking management strategy, including the introduction of pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone and Barton/Forrest areas.

Sustainable Transport Plan – An ACT Government Initiative

1.22 The Sustainable Transport Plan is part of the *Canberra Spatial Plan*.²⁷ The plan recommends improvements and innovations to the system to encourage greater use of public transport and alternatives to private vehicle use.²⁸ A 1997 report by the Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra found that most residents of the ACT made virtually all their trips by car. According to the report, this

25 National Capital Authority, Submissions, p 93.

26 ACT Government, Submissions, p 317.

27 The *Canberra Spatial Plan* is being developed between 2002 and 2003 and is a component of the overall Canberra Plan. It will integrate with the *Canberra Economic White Paper* and the *Canberra Social Plan* to provide a sustainable framework for Canberra's people, economy and environment.

28 ACT Planning and Land Authority, *Sustainable Transport Plan*, www.actpla.act.gov.au/plandev/transport/index.htm, accessed 28 August 2003.

was “easy to understand when one considers the attractiveness of alternatives”.²⁹

1.23 Key concerns driving the Sustainable Transport Plan include greenhouse emissions, economic sustainability, increased physical inactivity, equitable mobility/access and containing urban sprawl.³⁰ The aim of the Sustainable Transport Plan is “to achieve an efficient, effective, equitable, safe and sustainable transport system for Canberra”.³¹ The objectives of the Plan are to:

- minimise the need for costly road infrastructure in the future;
- increase public transport use;
- reduce greenhouse and air quality emissions;
- increase physical activity from cycling and walking;
- make better use of existing infrastructure;
- reduce single occupant car travel; and
- reduce congestion.³²

The Role of the Committee

1.24 The Committee’s Resolution of Appointment enables it to inquire into and report on, among other things, works in the Parliamentary Zone. The Committee has an advisory role in reporting to Parliament, it is not the approving authority. An inquiry and report to Parliament by the Committee does not replace the need for approval from both Houses of Parliament. This is a statutory requirement regardless of whether a Committee does, or does not conduct an inquiry into such a ‘work’. In the case of this inquiry, the works have not been proposed. However, by convention the NCA would still need to advise the Committee of proposed works and seek Parliamentary approval under Section 5 of the *Parliament Act 1974 (Cth)*.

29 Conservation Council of the South East Region and Canberra, *Canberra at the Crossroads: A Way Out of the Transport Mess*, October 1997, p 12.

30 ACT Planning and Land Authority, *Sustainable Transport Plan*, www.actpla.act.gov.au/plandev/transport/index.htm, accessed 28 August 2003.

31 ACT Planning and Land Authority, *Sustainable Transport Plan*, www.actpla.act.gov.au/plandev/transport/index.htm, accessed 28 August 2003.

32 ACT Planning and Land Authority, *Sustainable Transport Plan*, www.actpla.act.gov.au/plandev/transport/index.htm, accessed 28 August 2003.

Conduct of the Inquiry

- 1.25 In June 2002, the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government, the Hon. Wilson Tuckey MP, wrote to the Committee advising of a proposal for a new parking policy in the Parliamentary Zone. A submission prepared by the National Capital Authority was attached. On 16 September 2002, the Committee inspected existing parking facilities in the Parliamentary Zone and adjacent areas in Barton.
- 1.26 On 23 October 2002, the Committee passed a resolution to seek to have the issue of pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone referred to it for inquiry and report. On 10 December 2002, the Minister referred the proposal for pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone to the Committee for inquiry. 145 submissions were received. Twenty-six witnesses gave evidence at a public hearing on 9 May 2003. At this hearing, the Committee sought responses from people who work in the area who were following the day's proceedings via webcast, as to how they travelled to work that day and why they chose that particular mode of transport. The Committee recorded the responses of 456 employees (see tables 2.1 and 2.2) and has continued to receive feedback. A second public hearing was held on 13 August 2003 where evidence was received from the National Capital Authority and the ACT Government.

Structure of the Report

- 1.27 The report is divided into three chapters. Chapter Two examines the key issues which have arisen from the National Capital Authority's proposal for pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone. Chapter Three looks at the case both for and against pay parking, and outlines the respective views of the key groups and individuals involved in the inquiry, as well as outlining the Committee's views and recommendation.

Figure 1.2 Parking Overflow in the Parliamentary Zone



Source National Capital Authority, 2003.