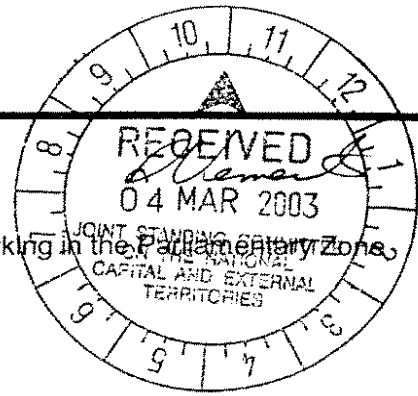


Clements, Quinton (REPS)

From: Committee, NCET (REPS)
Sent: Tuesday, 4 March 2003 1:11 PM
To: Clements, Quinton (REPS)
Subject: FW: Personal Submission by Michael Richards on pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone



-----Original Message-----

From: Richards, Michael [mailto:Michael.Richards@dcita.gov.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 March 2003 12:52 PM
To: Committee, NCET (REPS)
Subject: Personal Submission by Michael Richards on pay parking in the Parliamentary Zone

I would like to address one matter in relation to the issue of charging for parking in the Parliamentary Zone, which is often overlooked in public discussion of the issue. This is a personal opinion, and I represent myself only in making this point.

In my view there is a substantial issue of social equity in relation to people employed in the parliamentary triangle which is ignored by those advocating the introduction of pay parking.

Walter Burley Griffin envisaged a small city of some 30,000, set in one valley. His environmentalist instincts, town planning beliefs and the technology of the day predisposed him to propose a city in which public transport would be cheap and viable. Most people would have short commutes, and cars would be largely unnecessary.

During Canberra's early years this is how the city functioned. Many people rode bicycles, and even the poorest of the city's families could generally find some sort of housing within a reasonable range of the city heart, where the work was that brought them to Canberra in the first place.

The NCDC changed all that, when it brought in a completely different planning regime in the 1960s. The so-called 'Y-Plan' was built on the premise that motor cars were affordable, cheap, desirable and here to stay. Canberra grew around the high-speed highways that cars needed, and quickly outstripped the potential for public transport to compete. The public transport system has been bleeding to death ever since: it is slow, inflexible and underutilised.

Now we have Sydney-scale property values in Canberra's inner suburbs. The low-cost property options for low and medium-income employees in the centre of the city do not exist within walking or bicycle range any more. Furthermore, parents need to get their children to a complex array of childcare, school and after-school activities: but Mum isn't at home any more.

The world has changed, and Canberra with it. But not so the town planners. The basic propositions of the Y-plan are unchallenged by the successors to the NCDC. Urban infill has been tinkering at the edges. Vast acreages of land that could become suburban options within reasonable range of the city centre are reserved as pine forest or paddocks. Ridges and hills are left untouched, to build up massive fuel-loads in times of bushfire, fuses snaking into the suburbs. Commuters have to travel enormous distances to the new housing estates crammed into the narrow valleys of Tuggeranong or Gungahlin, poorly serviced by public transport except at narrowly-defined peak hours. Yet this is where young families, single parents and other moderately-paid Canberrans can afford to live.

So people use their cars to get to and from work - often poorly or moderately paid work, and often at times that are badly served by the bus timetables. These journeys are manageable by car, especially if flexitime is available and peak hour is avoided. But only by car are they manageable. We have spread a tiny population across enough room for a much larger city. Transport is not the only extra burden imposed on the people of Canberra as a result. Communities are poorly serviced and the few people at home during the day are isolated.

The introduction of paid parking will simply impose an extra cost on these families, because the public transport and the accessible housing options presupposed by restrictions on private use of cars don't exist. I believe that the social planners who are trying to alter transport patterns are ignoring the other side of the equation that they need to offer before the city can change - the home end of travel. They need to look beyond the quick fix in the heart of the city, and enter into a real debate with the ACT government to recover Walter Burley Griffin's vision of a sustainable, organic city where it is possible and viable for families to live within easy range of their work, in decent, affordable houses.

Respectfully submitted

Michael Richards

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