THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

REPORT ON THE PARLIAMENTARY ZONE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FEBRUARY 1984

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF

AUSTRALIA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

REPORT ON THE

PARLIAMENTARY ZONE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FEBRUARY 1984

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
TERMS OF REFERENCE

That a joint committee be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(a) all proposals for modification or variations of the plan of layout of the City of Canberra and its environs published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on 19 November 1925, as previously modified or varied, which are referred to the committee by the Minister for Territories and Local Government, and

(b) such matters relating to the Australian Capital Territory as may be referred to it by -

(i) resolution of either House of the Parliament, or

(ii) the Minister for Territories and Local Government.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Mr K.L. Fry, MP
Deputy Chairman:	Senator M.E. Reid
Members:	Senator P.J. Giles Senator M.E. Lajovic Senator M. Reynolds Mr C. Hollis, MP Mrs R.J. Kelly, MP Mr P.J. McGauran, MP Mr P.M. Ruddock, MP Mr J.H. Snow, MP
Secretary:	Mr A.J. Kelly

PARLIAMENTARY ZONE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Introduction

1. The National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) on 14 October 1983 provided a joint briefing to this Committee and to the Joint Committee on the New Parliament House on the Commission's Second Report on the Parliamentary Zone Draft Development Plan, dated September 1983.

2. The Parliamentary Zone Draft Development Plan published in June 1982 (the First Report) while dealing with the Parliamentary Zone as a whole, focussed its attention on Capital Hill. The major planning priority at the time was for the completion of the New Parliament House and associated roads, bridges and landscaping by 1988.

3. With the finalisation of major planning decisions concerning the Capital Hill area, attention then focussed on the remainder of the Parliamentary Zone.

4. The purpose of the Second Report is to describe the conclusions drawn from a series of functional and design studies of the Parliamentary Zone. It particularly addresses the planning and design issues which arise in the area to the North of the Provisional House, and concludes by proposing an amended Development Plan for this area.

5. The Development Plan now proposed contains further refinements to the First Report which simplify the traffic, address and parking arrangements, including a much clearer road system.

The Development Plan

6. The main changes to the 1982 Development Plan have resulted from:

- further consideration of the road circulation and address system;
- refinements to the treatment of the Lakeshore and Water Gate;
- proposals for the renovation of, and possible changes to, the Provisional House;
- the Government's decision to site the proposed National Archives Headquarters building between the National Library and the Mall. This location has not yet been approved under the provisions of the Parliament Act 1974.

Landscape design proposals have been advanced since the 1982 Report and more work has been done on principles and techniques to light the Parliamentary Zone at night. The Development Plan is flexible in the immediate area of the Provisional Parliament House as the future size and use of the House have yet to be decided.

7. During the briefing by the Commissioner of NCDC, Mr A. Powell, he pointed out that the quality of landscaping in the central northern part of the Zone was poor. The landscaping had always been a temporary measure until the site for the permanent Parliament House was decided. Consequently it was minimal and poorly defined.

8. Pedestrian movement within the Zone, particularly by tourists, is discouraged by the large distances between buildings. The scale of landscaping in the Northern part of the Zone dwarfs pedestrians and further discourages their use of the area. The Commission believes that the developments proposed for the Zone will impart a distinctive and attractive character, reaffirming the Burley Griffin land and water axes and encouraging pedestrian use of the area. Pedestrian use of the waterfront, at present rarely used, will be specifically encouraged.

9. The Commission believes that some form of shuttle bus service will be required within the Zone to allow easy movement of both tourists and public servants and reduce the reliance on large numbers of vehicles and the parking spaces that they would require.

10. The Commission's Second Report, on pages 12 and 13, states that:

"Griffin's plans for a cohesive and formal composition of buildings in the Parliamentary Zone did not develop. The amount of buildings which Griffin envisaged has not been, and may never be built. The buildings which do exist have been sited independently and differ greatly in mass and architectural style. Their site layouts reflect the several differing Development Plans of earlier years."

"The Griffin Plan relied on closely related buildings, many of which do not exist or have been changed significantly."

"The scope of the immediate building programme, over the next 10-20 years, will not enable the realisation of Griffin's built-form concepts in the Parliamentary Zone. Consequently, there is a need to find a new basis for the achievement of a fitting design structure for the Parliamentary Zone."

"The 1982 Development Plan showed how early implementation of an impressive and distinctly Australian character can be secured by planning an integrated landscape and circulation structure for the Zone, complemented by the incremental development of National institutions or other buildings as needs arise."

"... the irregular surface treatments and the absence of any coherent landscape theme results in downgrading the significance of the central space, which only unifies the area from a limited number of viewpoints. While the layout of the Zone is apparent from distant and elevated viewpoints, such as Mount Ainslie, it is poorly structured from local viewpoints, particularly in the areas lying to the north of King Edward Terrace."

"... because there has not been a great deal of building and the landscape treatment is mediocre, there are great opportunities to correct deficiencies of visual character by developing appropriate visual qualities."

"A plan which has the characteristics of clarity of layout, an appropriate scale in its parts, and a quality of design is required to guide the future development of the Zone."

11. A central theme of the revised Draft Development Plan is that the Plan can best be given the clarity, scale and quality essential to its success when the central Land Axis becomes the focus for visitors to the area. This principle can be fully realised when the existing buildings are provided with landscaping and public spaces to tie them into the Mall which will clearly mark the Land Axis.

12. The Committee believes it important that a long-term Development Plan be completed as soon as possible. Such a plan has been delayed by uncertainty as to the location and style of the New House. The Parliamentary Zone is the focal point of the national capital and it should now be developed as such. The completion of the New House and the major design elements of the remainder of the Parliamentary Zone by 1988 will be a fitting way to mark the Bicentenary in the national capital.

13. One aspect of the Draft Development Plan greatly concerns the Committee is the question of consultation. The Committee wrote to the Commissioner of NCDC expressing it's concern at the apparent lack of consultation planned. The Committee sought assurances that all members and senators would have an opportunity to comment on the Plan and that the community at large would also have that opportunity. A letter dated 24 February 1984 was received from the Secretary and Manager of the Commission. The letter read:

> Late last year the Commission presented its proposals for the future development of the northern section of the Parliamentary Zone at a combined meeting of the ACT and New Parliament House Committees. It is now intended that the Parliamentary Zone North proposals will be considered by the Government in conjunction with the Archives Headquarters Building which has reached preliminary design stage. This will necessarily involve some delay but as soon as Government endorsement is obtained we will then be in a position to advise you on timing for the gazettal and consultation processes in respect of the road variations.

The Committee notes that consultation is mentioned only in connection with gazettal of variations.

14. The Committee does not regard such an approach as adequately involving the Parliament nor does this constitute adequate public consultation on a Development Plan.

15. The Parliamentary Zone is a National Capital area and final responsibility for planning policies within the Zone is shared between the Parliament and the Government. However, the area is a central feature of the National Capital and belongs to the people of Australia who have a right to be informed of proposals for the Zone and given the opportunity to comment on them. A large number of people who work in the Zone or visit it regularly are also affected. Additionally, planning in the Zone affects the planning of adjacent areas.

16. While this Committee is empowered to scrutinise national capital matters on behalf of the Parliament, it cannot speak on behalf of all Members and Senators on such matters. The proposals are of such a nature that all Members and Senators should be advised of them and be given the opportunity to comment.

17. The Plan is an important one as it finalises the basic framework of the Zone which has not been possible before now. This Plan is intended to impart a distinctive character to the Zone for generations to come. While there is some urgency in gaining approval this is no excuse for not providing adequate consultation.

Proposed Works

18. The works proposed allow for completion of the settings of both the new Parliament House and Archives Building, and any changes to be made to the Provisional House after the opening of the New House. The proposed Plan also allows for future buildings to be added as the need arises. With the exception of changes to the Provisional House, completion of the proposed works is desirable, prior to the Bicentenary celebrations in 1988. This will require a tight program of works for completion by that date. Major plantings such as the avenues of trees along the mall will need to be made quickly if they are to have any visual impact by 1988. A broad estimate of the cost of the works is $22m.

19. With regard to landscaping, the Committee was told that shallow soil over rock in the northern part of the Zone has limited the growth potential of larger trees. Existing trees planted north of King Edward Terrace have not done very well. Significant preparation and treatment of subsoil is required, such as perhaps deep trenching (3m to 5m) and ripping over areas for major tree planting.

20. The main aims of the landscape design proposal are to:

- realise a coherent design structure for the Parliamentary Zone within 10-15 years of completion;
- define the spaces in which future buildings may be constructed without creating barriers between those buildings and the surrounding spaces;
- reinforce and enhance the central grassed space of the Mall with eucalypts which will appear as clear lines in perspective but act as a "tracery" or "foil" to buildings and spaces seen from within the Mall.

Actions Sought

21. During the briefing, NCDC pointed out that the design is still evolving and the current proposals may not fully represent the final designs which would be constructed. At this stage, the Commission is seeking an approval in principle of the works proposed for the northern part of the Parliamentary Zone.

22. An early approval in principle of the Development Plan is considered necessary by the NCDC so as to allow sufficient time for the design, planning, construction and landscaping of the proposed works to be completed prior to the Bicentenary celebrations in 1988. An approval in principle of the overall design is also seen by the Commission as desirable before coming to the respective Committees seeking approval for individual elements of the Plan. The Committee agrees with this approach.

23. The Committee believes that the Development Plan of September 1983 is a good one because:

- it provides an overall framework within which road proposals, landscape proposals and long-term development can be resolved in a way that will complement the New Parliament House;

- the Plan will complete Griffin's land axis between the New Parliament House and the Lake; and

- the Plan is sufficiently in keeping with Burley Griffin's Plans given the structure and location of existing buildings and the need for the Zone to cope with modern day traffic problems including tourist and commuter traffic. The 1983 Plan provides a much clearer road system and an improved pedestrian environment in the Parliamentary Triangle. In general, the layout is now more suitable for tourists.

However, as noted earlier, public and wider parliamentary consultation is required on the Plan.

24. The Committee believes that notwithstanding the need for further consultation, an early in principle approval of the Development Plan is necessary to allow sufficient time for the design, planning, construction and landscaping of the proposed works to be completed prior to the Bicentenary celebrations in 1988.

25. The Committee therefore approves the overall design embodied in the Development Plan in principle. It should be recognised that a number of individual elements will still need to come before this Committee or the Joint Committee on the New Parliament House for approval.

KEN FRY
Chairman
28 February 1984

THIRTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

NO. 15

MONDAY, 14 OCTOBER 1983

at Canberra

PRESENT: Mr Fry (Chairman)
Senator Reid (Deputy Chairman)
Senator Giles
Mr Hollis
Mrs Kelly

1 The Committee met at 9.20am together with the Joint Committee on the New Parliament House.

2 BRIEFING - PARLIAMENTARY ZONE:

The Committees were briefed by representatives of the National Capital Development Commission on the Parliamentary Zone Draft Development Plan.

3 ADJOURNMENT:

The Committee adjourned at 10.30am until a date and time to be fixed.

Confirmed

Chairman.