

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

REPORT ON PROPOSALS FOR VARIATIONS OF THE PLAN OF LAYOUT OF THE CITY OF CANBERRA AND ITS ENVIRONS

VARIATIONS 1989/1 (ITEM 1) - Relating to
the Re-development of Morshead Drive

Joint Parliamentary Committee
on the Australian Capital Territory

February 1991

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MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Chairman	Mr John Langmore, MP
Deputy Chairman	Senator Margaret Reid
Members	Senator Terry Aulich Senator Robert Bell Senator Warwick Parer Senator Sue West Mr Paul Elliott, MP Hon. John Moore, MP Hon. Gordon Scholes, MP Mr John Sharp, MP
Secretary to the Committee	Mr Grant Harrison
Administrative Assistant	Mrs Marlene Lyons

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee was appointed to inquire into and report on:

- . the National Capital Plan and amendments to the Plan which are referred to it by the Minister responsible for the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*; and
- . such other 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 responsible for the Australian Capital Territory.

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VARIATIONS TO THE PLAN OF CANBERRA

1. Section 12A of the *Seat of Government (Administration) Act 1910* provides that the Commonwealth Minister responsible for administering the Act may vary the gazetted plan of layout of the City of Canberra. To take effect, a variation must be tabled in both Houses of Parliament where it may be disallowed. It has been the practice of the Minister to refer proposed variations to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Australian Capital Territory before tabling in Parliament.
2. This process of making variations to the plan of Canberra will continue only until the Governor-General declares, by Proclamation, an end to the transition period for the introduction of self-government in the Territory. Once an end to the transition period is declared, the role of the Commonwealth Minister in varying the plan of Canberra will cease as will the practice of referring proposed variations to the Committee. The responsibility for determining the alignments of roads, other than those designated in the National Capital Plan as main avenues and approach routes, will be transferred to the Australian Capital Territory Government.
3. The *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*, as amended, specifies that an end shall be declared to the transition period no later than two years after Self-Government Day. That is, no later than 11 May 1991. Accordingly, it is expected that this will be the last occasion on which the Committee will report to the Parliament on a proposed variation to the plan of Canberra.

VARIATION 1989/1 (ITEM 1)

The Committee's Previous Reports on this Matter

4. The Committee has reported to the Parliament twice previously on this proposed variation - in August 1989 and November 1990.
5. In its last report, tabled on 15 November 1990, the Committee recommended that the Minister approve that part of the proposed variation relating to the construction of an expressway from Newcastle Street, Fyshwick, across Dairy Flat and over the Molonglo River to connect with Morshead Drive at a roundabout. The Committee decided to defer its consideration of the remaining part of the variation, relating to the proposed redevelopment of Morshead Drive as the main access between central Canberra and the expressway, because of concerns about:

- the extent to which the alignment that was then proposed for Morshead Drive intruded into the riverside recreation areas; and
- the impact of the re-development on the amenity of the recreation areas.

6. In the report, and subsequently, the Committee asked the Department of Defence, the Defence Housing Authority, the National Capital Planning Authority and representatives of the ACT Government to:

- . develop a more northerly alignment for the proposed road - one that would preserve a greater amount of public land on the riverside of the road by encroaching onto land occupied by the Royal Military College (Duntroon);
- . identify more clearly the number and type of trees that may be under threat from a new road alignment and its construction;
- . develop a landscaping strategy, involving a forward planting program (to commence well before any roadworks), the transplanting of established trees in good condition and the use of advanced size stock in any new plantings; and
- . reconsider the necessity of installing traffic lights at the intersection of Morshead Drive and Jubilee Avenue (the main entrance to the Royal Military College).

7. At a public hearing on 4 February 1991 the Committee was presented with a new proposed variation which had been developed in the light of the Committee's concerns.

The New Proposed Variation

8. The new proposal is for the construction of a four lane divided carriageway road on an alignment that requires a strip of about 1,500 square metres of land from the Royal Military College. The road would include a roundabout at a proposed new main entrance to the College. It is intended to close the current entrance to the College, at Jubilee Avenue, on completion of the new entrance. The Plant Road entrance would remain open to traffic to and from the northern carriageway of Morshead Drive.

9. Plans provided by the ACT Government show that the new proposal would require a number of minor alterations to the corridor boundaries originally notified in the Commonwealth Gazette of 5 May 1989. These alterations and the variations that would be required to the currently gazetted road corridor are shown at Appendix 1.

COMMENTS

10. The variation that was presented to the Committee on 15 November 1990 had been designed to avoid entirely any impact on land used by the Royal Military College. This would have meant a more southerly alignment for Morshead Drive and consequently would have excised a substantial strip of land from the riverside recreation area along almost the full length of the road.

11. Following the Committee's last report, a compromise solution was developed, to which the Department of Defence has agreed, involving the use of a small amount of land within the grounds of the Royal Military College. This has meant that a more northerly alignment for Morshead Drive is now possible and that less public land is required for the re-development of the road. In the Committee's view, this new proposed variation results in a much better balance between the use of Defence and public land.

12. The new proposed variation is also consistent with the Department of Defence's development plans for the future of the College. These plans, which seek to preserve the heritage values of this important national institution and upgrade the infrastructure and facilities within the College, provide for the construction of a new main entrance to the College and the possible relocation of the Badge Gates presently at Jubilee Avenue. The new proposed variation will in fact allow the Department of Defence to implement its development plans sooner than expected.

13. The results of a detailed assessment of the existing trees in the area, and the potential impact on these trees of any roadworks, were also made available to the Committee. The assessment showed that the new proposed variation would affect 81 trees. Of these, 40 are considered to be in poor or only fair condition, while 41 are in good or excellent condition. The ACT Government have advised that it would not be cost effective to attempt to transplant trees in poor or fair condition as their chances of survival are relatively slim. Of the 41 trees in good or excellent condition, 5 have been identified as being relatively easy to transplant and with a high likelihood of survival. The remaining 36 good quality trees are considered to be difficult to transplant or to be unlikely to survive transplanting. These assessments were based on the size of the trees, the way in which each species is known to respond to transplanting and the estimated cost of transplanting.

14. Although a total of 75 trees would be lost under the new proposed variation, this is considerably fewer than the 140 trees that were estimated to be at risk under the variation presented to the Committee on 15 November 1990.

15. A plan of indicative plantings and landscape treatments was also presented to the Committee. This preliminary work seems to recognise the need to reduce the visual impact of the proposed new roadway from the riverside area, and indicates that the number of trees proposed to be planted is greater than the number that may be removed. The Committee acknowledges that these plans and the tree assessment described earlier represent only the first stage of the development of a detailed landscape design for the area and that further work is needed to refine the plans. One particular

aspect of the design that needs refinement is the provision of an access road and car parks within the recreation area. The present design of the access road and car parks intrudes visually and practically into an already narrow corridor of parkland and would threaten rather than emphasise the existing character of the area.

16. The need for a more sophisticated design is also recognised by the NCPA which, in a letter to the Committee dated 1 February 1991, identified several concerns about the proposed landscape and road design. In the view of the NCPA the final design should not only enhance the character and quality of the area, but should reflect the importance of Morshead Drive as the most direct road link between the airport and central Canberra. The Authority has suggested that it may be appropriate to construct a wider median strip between the two carriageways so that an avenue of trees could be planted between the carriageways.

17. The Committee agrees that the final design of both the landscape and the road should reflect the role of Morshead Drive as a major approach road, but is concerned that the design solution suggested by the NCPA would require the use of more land than is allowed for under the new proposed variation. The most likely effect of using more land would be to increase the extent of road intrusion into the riverside recreation area. As yet the NCPA has not developed its design in any detail. Without any information about alignment or potential environmental impact, the Committee is unable to assess the impact of the design on the visual and recreational amenity of the area. The Committee is, therefore, not in a position to endorse the NCPA's suggested design.

18. The final matter the Committee sought to have reconsidered was the necessity of installing traffic lights at the intersection of Morshead Drive and Jubilee Avenue. As described earlier, the new proposal incorporates the closure of the Jubilee Avenue entrance to the Royal Military College and the construction of a new entrance to the College. The Committee is pleased to note that traffic at this intersection is proposed to be controlled by a roundabout, not a set of traffic lights.

IMPACT OF THE VARIATION ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PLAN

19. The area of land through which Morshead Drive passes has been designated in the National Capital Plan as having the special characteristics of the National Capital. Accordingly, any works in this area are subject to approval by the NCPA.

20. In addition, the National Capital Plan shows the existing gazetted alignment for Morshead Drive. Any changes to the existing gazetted alignment, such as those in the new proposed variation presented to the Committee, would, if approved, require a formal amendment to the National Capital Plan. The processes involved in amending the National Capital Plan have been described by the Parliament in the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act and in the terms of reference given to the Committee.

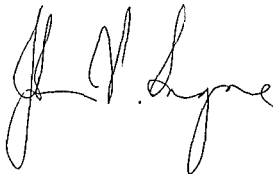
21. In this, as in all such instances, the National Capital Plan would need to be amended before the NCPA could approve any works in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL COMMENT

22. The Committee recommends that:

- (a) the variation to the plan of Canberra shown at Appendix 1 and marked Attachment B, which would allow for the re-development of Morshead Drive between the Eastern Parkway and 200 meters west of Jubilee Avenue, be approved;
- (b) the National Capital Planning Authority ensure that the final landscape design within the riverside recreation area reflects the concerns identified by the Committee at paragraphs 15 and 16 of the report; and
- (c) notwithstanding the need to ensure that the design of the new Morshead Drive reflects its role as a major approach road, the road should be confined to the corridor recommended at (a) above.

23. The Committee would support a proposal to amend the National Capital Plan to incorporate an alignment for Morshead Drive that is identical to that recommended at paragraph 22 (a) and would not seek, pursuant to its terms of reference, referral of such a proposed amendment. The Committee would expect, however, that any amendment proposing a different alignment for Morshead Drive would be referred to it for consideration.



John Langmore, MP
Chairman

19 February 1991

PAPERS AND PLANS RELATING TO THE PROPOSED VARIATION

Letter from ACT Department of Environment, Land and Planning (dated 30 January 1991) including plans showing:

- (a) the proposed changes to the gazetted corridor for Morshead Drive that were notified in the Commonwealth Gazette of 5 May 1989, and the alterations that would be required to this original notification by the new proposed variation; and
- (b) the changes to the currently gazetted corridor for Morshead Drive that the new proposed variation would require.



ACT GOVERNMENT

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT LAND AND PLANNING

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TEL (06) 246 8211 FAX (06) 246 8113

D E L P

30 January 1991

Mr G Harrison
Secretary
Joint Parliamentary Committee on
The Australian Capital Territory
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Harrison

I refer to the Department's letter of 23 January 1991 and to our recent discussions concerning resumption of the Joint Committee's hearing on the gazettal of Morshead Drive from Morshead Drive between Eastern Parkway and the rock cutting some 200 metres west of Jubilee Avenue.

The following attachments are provided for your information.

Attachment A

Plan showing the original road alignment as notified in the Intention to Vary the City Plan. The areas coloured green on the plan show those parts of the alignment which following consultation between ACT Public Works, Defence, ITPA and NCPA have been excluded from the revised alignment.

Attachment B

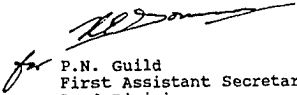
Plan showing the realignment of Morshead Drive as agreed by ACT Public Works, Defence ITPA and the NCPA.

West of the proposed new Duntroon Entrance minor adjustment to the northern boundary and southern boundary of the proposed gazetted corridor for Morshead Drive is involved.

ACT Public Works have a larger scale plan available for inspection, prior to the hearing, if it would be helpful to you. Please telephone Mr Peter Tait on 246 8764 if you wish to arrange a viewing.

Officers from ACT Public Works will attend an on-site meeting as requested on Monday 4 February 1991.

Yours faithfully


P.N. Guild
First Assistant Secretary
Land Division



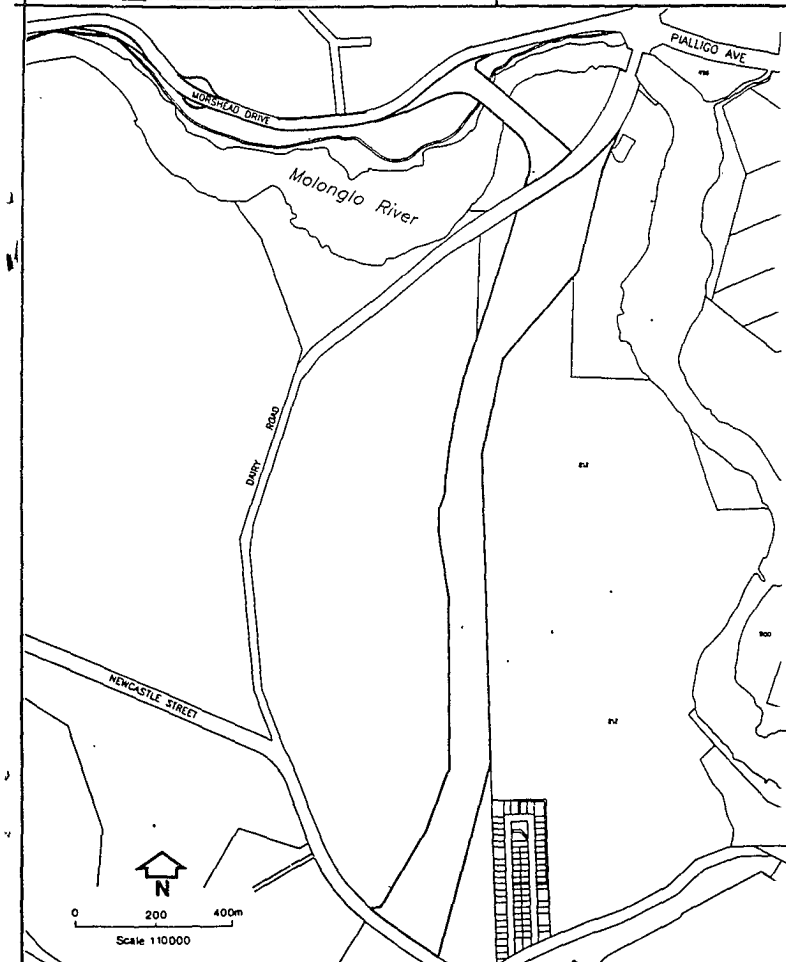
ACT ADMINISTRATION
O 1 and D

VARIATION No.1



ROAD ADDITION

MONARO HIGHWAY: Newcastle Street to Morshead Drive
- Road Addition



ROAD ADDITION



MONARO HIGHWAY: Newcastle Street to Morshead Drive
- Road Addition

WITNESSES WHO APPEARED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE AT THE PUBLIC HEARING ON MONDAY 4 FEBRUARY 1991

Australian Capital Territory Government Agencies

- . ACT Public Works
 - Ron Black, General Manager, Asset Management Branch
 - Helen Cohen, General Manager, Landscape Branch
- . Department of the Environment, Land and Planning
 - Hans Sommer, Assistant Secretary, Land and Planning Branch

Commonwealth Government Agencies

- . Defence Housing Authority
 - Ed David, Manager, Corporate Services
- . Department of Defence
 - Colonel Ray McCann, Deputy Director, Accommodation and Works - Army
- . National Capital Planning Authority
 - Lyndsay Neilson, Chief Executive
 - Malcolm Smith, Chief Planner