COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Proof Committee Hansard

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Subcommittee

Reference: Bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way at the Russell roundabout, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

WEDNESDAY, 6 AUGUST 2008

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE PARLIAMENT

[PROOF COPY]

INTERNET

Hansard transcripts of public hearings are made available on the internet when authorised by the committee.

The internet address is:

http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard

To search the parliamentary database, go to:
http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Wednesday, 6 August 2008

Members: Mr Butler *(Chair)*, Senator Troeth *(Deputy Chair)*, Senators Mark Bishop and Forshaw and Mr Champion, Mr Forrest, Mr Hale, Mr Lindsay and Mr Slipper

Members in attendance: (Senator Michael Forshaw, Senator the Hon. Judith Troeth)

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way at the Russell roundabout, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

WITNESSES

ABBAS SAYED, Dr Khaled, Principal Transport Planner, Consultant, National Capital Authority 1, 25

de JAGER, Mr Mark Henry, Director and Cost Planner, Consultant, National Capital Authority 1

GILL, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT 1, 11

HILL, Ms Jennifer, Heritage Specialist, Consultant, National Capital Authority 25

JACOBSEN, Mr Lindsay Kristian, Traffic Engineer, Consultant, National Capital Authority 1, 25

ODGERS, Mr Brett James, Chair, Canberra Chapter, Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. 13

PEGRUM, Ms Annabelle Nicole, Chief Executive, National Capital Authority 1, 25

PILTON, Mr Adrian Duncan, Consultant Technical Team Director and Architect, National Capital Authority 1, 25

SMITH, Mr Andrew Douglas, Acting Managing Director, Projects, National Capital Authority 1, 25

WAITE, Mr Philip Anthony, Director, Construction and Procurement, National Capital Authority 1, 25

WEIRICK, Professor James Murray, President, Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc. 13

Subcommittee met at 10.54 am

ABBAS SAYED, Dr Khaled, Principal Transport Planner, Consultant, National Capital Authority

de JAGER, Mr Mark Henry, Director and Cost Planner, Consultant, National Capital Authority

JACOBSEN, Mr Lindsay Kristian, Traffic Engineer, Consultant, National Capital Authority

PEGRUM, Ms Annabelle Nicole, Chief Executive, National Capital Authority

PILTON, Mr Adrian Duncan, Consultant, Technical Team Director and Architect, Consultant, National Capital Authority

SMITH, Mr Andrew Douglas, Acting Managing Director, Projects, National Capital Authority

WAITE, Mr Philip Anthony, Director, Construction and Procurement, National Capital Authority

GILL, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT

ACTING CHAIR (Senator Troeth)—I declare open this public hearing of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, which is inquiring into the proposed bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way at the Russell roundabout, Canberra, ACT. Several submissions have been received by the committee this morning, and if members of the public would like to see those submissions or obtain a copy of them they are available from the secretariat.

I now welcome the representatives of the National Capital Authority. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and consequently warrant the same respect as proceedings of the parliament itself. I remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of parliament. Ms Pegrum, would you care to make some opening remarks.

Ms Pegrum—Thank you for the opportunity to present the proposed construction of the bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way to the Public Works Committee. The proponent of this work is the National Capital Authority. The authority manages the Australian government's continuing interest in the planning, promotion, enhancement and maintenance of Canberra as our nation's capital. Firstly, I would like to clarify and amend the statement of evidence submitted by the authority in April 2008. There are three amendments. The first is at paragraph 7 of our submission, which states that the withdrawal of funding by the government was $46.5 million. The NCA has received comment that this figure is confusing when compared to the $58.8 million of capital works appropriation and the $26.6 million budget for the project. To clarify the cost figures we wished to amend paragraph 5 to read:

In 2007 the National Capital Authority was appropriated $71.8 million for an integrated infrastructure works initiative for central Canberra. The initiative included the overpass at Kings Avenue-Parkes Way, valued at $26.6 million, and the reconstruction of Constitution Avenue, $32.2 million. The NCA was also appropriated associated maintenance funds of $9.4 million and administered depreciation appropriation of $5 million over four years. In 2008 a budget savings of $46.3 million was made, leaving the $26.6 million for the construction of the bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way and $300,000 to conclude the Constitution Avenue project at that time.

The second change is to replace the first sentence of paragraph 8 to read:

Funding of $26.6 million for the bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way at the Russell roundabout has been appropriated for this project subject to the support of the Public Works Committee for the project to proceed.

Finally, based on further heritage assessment it is proposed now to submit a referral under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Consequently, the following amendments are proposed to paras 58 and 59. At paragraph 58 delete the first sentence and replace it with:

This assessment addresses the impact of the infrastructure project on the heritage values of these places.

At paragraph 59 delete the second sentence and replace it with:

The conclusion is that referral under the EPBC Act to the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts is required in relation to trees on the perimeter of Kings Park that are within the Parliament House vista.

In this opening statement I wish to address the need for the project, traffic modelling, heritage and bridge design. The site for the project is the intersection of Parkes Way and Kings Avenue. The intersection is located in the heart of the national capital at the junction of east-west and north-south traffic routes and is a critical intersection in the metropolitan traffic network. This project will address long-held concerns regarding one of Canberra's worst traffic bottlenecks. Black spot road accident statistics reveal that 475 accidents were recorded at the intersection in the five-year period ending January 2008. This is approximately two accidents per week. Growth in office, retail and residential accommodation is expected to occur in the next five to seven years and will result in a significant increase in traffic levels using the intersection. The authority has calculated that, based on known and committed future developments within central Canberra, these traffic volumes will increase to approximately 17,000 vehicles per hour at the am peak period by 2014-15, an increase of 250 per cent. The current level of traffic results in congestion and causes delay to traffic moving in and from key locations in central Canberra. These include Parliament House, the parliamentary zone, the airport and the city. Unless improvements are made to the intersection, delays and accident rates will increase as traffic volumes grow. The bridging of Kings Avenue over Parkes Way will provide improved and more reliable transport links between Canberra City, Parliament House and the airport. Undertaking the project at this time will ensure that the intersection is completed and ready to meet the growing demand.

The site also has heritage characteristics. Kings Avenue defines the eastern side of Griffin's national triangle from Parliament House, across Lake Burley Griffin, towards the Russell defence precinct. Parkes Way was proposed by Sir William Holford in 1958 in his advisory report into the future development of Canberra. The site is located adjacent to the

Commonwealth heritage-listed places of the Parliament House vista and the Russell defence precinct. In developing the proposal, the authority has consulted with key government agencies including the ACT government, the Department of Finance and Deregulation, the Department of Defence, the Australian Federal Police and the Attorney-General's Department. In our view, the design of the bridge strikes an appropriate balance between heritage, ceremonial and practical metropolitan traffic management issues.

In preparing the option, the authority considered four possible proposals. These were: (1) a 'do-nothing' approach which provided a business as usual case for comparative purposes; (2) a single bridge which provided for concurrent right-hand turns—this is known as a single-point urban interchange with unimpeded east-west traffic passing underneath; (3) a twin bridge or tight-diamond interchange which provided for a single right-hand turn on the upper level with unimpeded east-west traffic passing underneath; and (4) analysis of a four-way at-grade intersection, which was also undertaken. The authority's traffic-modelling assumptions were developed and agreed upon with the ACT government. The assumptions tested additional floor space development within central Canberra of 520,000 square metres and one million square metres respectively. For traffic modelling purposes, these areas have been assumed to be reached in 2013 and 2021, respectively, as is illustrated in one of the diagrams before you today.

Testing was undertaken using a Sidra and a Paramics analysis. Sidra provides comparative assessment of different intersection performance independent of the traffic network. It assumes that all traffic that wishes to reach the intersection can do so. Paramics models test the impact of the intersection on the overall traffic network. Traffic analysis demonstrated that the single-bridge option provided the most significant improvement in traffic movements. The performance of the third, or twin-bridge option, would be significantly better than the current do-nothing case, but its overall performance was 50 per cent less than that of the single bridge. The at-grade intersection offered a reduced level of service to that of the existing Russell roundabout.

On the basis of optimal traffic performance and advice from our heritage consultant that either the twin- or single-bridge options would enhance heritage values, the authority has elected to propose that the single-bridge, or single-point, urban interchange be constructed at the intersection of Kings Avenue and Parkes Way. In order to achieve this, Parkes Way will be lowered to provide unimpeded traffic movement in an east-west direction and a new bridge will carry Kings Avenue traffic to the Russell defence precinct. This approach will significantly improve intersection performance and, in our view, enhance the Kings Avenue definition of one side of Walter Burley Griffin's national triangle.

The design provides for signalised pedestrian crossings, ensuring safe passage across this busy intersection for pedestrians moving between the defence precinct and Lake Burley Griffin. It adopts the ACT government's on-road cycling strategy and it makes provision for dedicated cycle lanes on both Kings Avenue and Parkes Way. Similarly, provision has been made for further enhancements in public transport services. The design enables future construction of dedicated bus lay-bys, signalised prioritisation for buses and the potential installation of light rail through the centre of the bridge. There will be significant savings through reduced accidents, carbon emissions, travel times and vehicle-operating costs. Advice provided to the authority is that the cumulative benefit of these savings will exceed the capital investment by the government within five years of construction.

With regard to construction, and subject to the support of the committee, the authority envisages a two-stage delivery of the project. Stage 1 is the construction of a 350-millimetre diameter gas main pipe to coincide with the period of low gas demand during the 2008-09 summer. Stage 2 will provide for tenders for the remainder of the construction so that they can be called immediately following completion of the project's technical documentation. Contractors will of course be required to comply with Commonwealth government regulatory requirements, including compliance with the National Code of Practice for the Construction Industry, and must be certified with the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner. To assist the community's and the committee's understanding of the benefits of the project, the authority has available for viewing a Paramics film indicating traffic modelling for the network and of the intersection. Thank you for the opportunity to present the proposal.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much for that. I will ask you to proceed with those showings now. Perhaps you could give just a short indication of the time frame and the way in which they should be viewed. For people who cannot see the screen, I suggest that you move to this side of the room to see that.

Mr Smith—The authority proposes to show three short Paramics films. Each will last approximately two minutes. The first of these three will demonstrate the performance of the existing roundabout with the proposed 520,000 square metres of additional development in central Canberra. This is our base case—or do-nothing—scenario. The second of the three films will show the performance of the intersection with the addition of 520,000 square metres development but, as Ms Pegrum advised, it also includes a number of intersection and network improvements elsewhere in central Canberra, as this project of itself cannot address all of Canberra's impending traffic concerns or congestion issues. The third will be of the intersection itself, independent of any network considerations, with traffic movement that would be generated from an additional one million square metres development in central Canberra. The models will start at 7:30 in the morning and run for approximately two minutes. Here is the first model.

A video was then shown—

As I mentioned before, this is the do-nothing scenario. At the bottom of the screen is the time. It shows approximately a quarter to eight. We can see congestion developing at the Anzac Parade-Constitution Avenue roundabout, extending right along to the Coranderrk Street roundabout and across, further to the west of that roundabout, into western Canberra. Traffic at the intersection of Kings Avenue and Parkes Way is starting to accumulate. The queue at eight o'clock is approximately 50 per cent of the distance between Kings Avenue and Anzac Parade. You can see significant queuing also occurring along Kings Avenue heading towards the city end.

At approximately 10 past eight traffic is close to a standstill west of Anzac Parade and there is very slow movement of traffic occurring around the roundabout at Kings Avenue and Parkes Way. Approaching 20 past eight, traffic along Parkes Way has essentially reached a standstill, with very little movement. Queuing around the Kings Avenue-Parkes Way roundabout is starting to occur and a build-up of traffic is extending past the Sellheim Avenue roundabout through to the roundabout closer to the airport. At 8.30 the model shows that, on the current expected levels of development, by about 2012 to 2014 central Canberra traffic will be close to a standstill.

We will go now to the second model and once again we will start at 7.30 in the morning. To refresh our memories, this model shows the intersection of Kings Avenue and Parkes Way upgraded. It also includes modifications to key intersections along Constitution Avenue and an increase in capacity along Constitution Avenue. As we saw from the earlier model, traffic failure will occur at those intersections. The key difference at the Anzac Parade-Constitution Avenue intersection is the capacity to do concurrent right turns. At the moment that facility does not exist. At eight o'clock, where previously there was significant traffic congestion moving to the far west of the central Canberra area, traffic is still flowing smoothly. While there is some build-up of vehicles, it is significantly reduced from the earlier model. For the committee's information, the base data that is driving both these presentations is identical. At a bit past 8.30, where previously we saw complete gridlock, through the modelling of the construction of this proposal and additional works along Constitution Avenue many of the traffic congestion concerns are addressed.

We will now go to the third model. This model assumes that all network issues have been resolved. It was developed to stress-test the intersection and assumes traffic volumes that would be generated by one million square metres of development in central Canberra. It starts at 8 am. At 8.25 traffic continues to flow quite smoothly. The right-hand turn from Parkes Way towards Barton, the Parliamentary Zone and Parliament House has some queuing, but those vehicles generally will only wait for one red light cycle before moving on. There may be a few at the tail end of a queue that wait for two. Of course we are talking a very significant level of development for this to occur. Based on this model, the authority is confident that the design solution proposed offers significant longevity and will serve Canberra well for many years to come.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. I think they demonstrated it extremely well. To move to the other end of the time frame, assuming that this development goes ahead, how will traffic cope with the considerable disruption that will occur?

Mr Waite—Certainly, during the construction phase the traffic will be at a reduced speed, obviously, to what it is now. The first thing that would happen that would determine that is the fact that, during a construction phase, speeds would be reduced down to 40 kilometres per hour. That should be overshadowed by saying that there would be a public information process about what this means in terms of delays to the airport. But, in constructing the bridge, the first thing to do would be to clear out engineering services and relocate them. That is the proposed first step so that it does not confuse the civil engineering and roadworks phase. Once that phase starts, when those services have been relocated, that means a concentrated effort in the shortest possible time frame can be allocated to civil engineering and roadworks. The bridge itself can be built within the existing roundabout—the actual structure. If I can refer you to the key colour plan, you can see that the intersection faintly dotted underneath is the existing roundabout and that the bridge can actually be built within that. So that would be a focused construction site. The existing roundabout would remain as a means of moving through the intersection, as would the existing roads approaching the roundabout.

Once the actual bridge work is built within that roundabout, the excavation work and the construction of the bridge, there is then an opportunity—and this would depend on the successful contractor, but there are a number of options—to build temporary side roads on either side of the final scheme. Those roads could be built on a staged basis but, once again, keeping

through-traffic going through the intersection, and being able to move around the roundabout as well. Construction traffic will be using that roundabout. There will be a further inner lane created, dedicated so that construction traffic can enter the site but the three existing lanes would remain operational. That will enable traffic to keep moving through that intersection but it will, for the concentrated period of the civil and roadworks, slow down movement through that intersection.

Mr Smith—The overall construction period is expected to be in the order of 18 months, perhaps a little bit longer, and much of the bridge works will be done, as Mr Waite said, within the roundabout but the relocation period will probably be in the order of 10 to 12 months.

Senator FORSHAW—Which period are we talking about? When would you assume construction would start?

Mr Waite—The main civil works would probably start, subject to approvals and the timing of that, in the middle of next year. Engineering services would take place first. There may be an opportunity to do some of that work in parallel with the civil construction but our first priority would be to take the risk out of moving those services, to move them and clear them out of the way of the main civil works. So the main works would start in the middle of next year.

Senator FORSHAW—Do you know whether the works that are currently being undertaken on the approaches into the airport will be finished by then?

Mr Waite—I will ask Mr Gill to answer that, but the works would be significantly advanced.

Mr Gill—The package of works at the airport will be finished by March, Easter, next year, but there will be some subsequent works. So there will be a series of road construction packages happening at the same time, and that is the reality.

Senator FORSHAW—I was just thinking in terms of the constant disruption, or disruption followed by a short distance and then further disruption as you get to the airport.

Mr Waite—One of the most important steps in starting the project off would be a traffic management plan which deals with all the safety issues, the staging of the project and how the traffic operates through the intersection. That would be a document that the ACT government and Mr Gill's area would have to agree with us on and accept as the correct approach. The other thing to say about the traffic is that the Australian Federal Police have been very cooperative with their input into managing that process as well.

Ms Pegrum—And of course in giving substantial advice to the community before and during the works about the changed traffic conditions.

ACTING CHAIR—Which brings me to my next question. I notice that you have had extensive consultation with government departments and industry, but you have not indicated any consultation with the public. Has any of that taken place up till now?

Ms Pegrum—If I can put this project into context, this is one of the initiatives of a policy piece of work that was completed in 2004 called the Griffin Legacy. That indicated the overpass

at Kings Avenue. Post that time there were four amendments to the National Capital Plan, which were subject to public consultation, and in at least one of those it was clear that an overpass was suggested in this particular location. There was then considerable public airing of this project, particularly through the media, at the time of the budget announcement in 2007-08. The indication of the overpass has been included on a large public model at an exhibition at our National Capital Exhibition.

If the committee agrees to this work, there will then be referral under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act associated with landscape issues at the edge of the Parliament House vista, which is listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List. There will of course be considerable additional information on the look of the design, post a decision of the parliament in reference to this recommendation. There is not an intention to consult on the aesthetic of the design. As has been the case with other works that go before the Public Works Committee, this hearing constitutes much of that discussion. But, yes, there has been considerable airing of the project, and of course the proposal has been on the committee's website associated with this hearing.

ACTING CHAIR—Does the Griffin Legacy Forum include the Walter Burley Griffin Society Incorporated?

Ms Pegrum—No, it does not. The forum includes those critical stakeholders who have land or other considerations associated with this—that is, the ACT government, the Department of Defence, the Department of Finance and Deregulation and the National Capital Authority. It exists under a memorandum of understanding.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you.

Senator FORSHAW—This proposal in your submission does not deal with all of the problems. In fact, you make the statement that there will still be other difficulties into the future, particularly resulting from the increased development. I think you are talking in particular about Constitution Avenue and the more western intersections, where those other roundabouts are. It is not before us, but it would be nice to know that those works were going to take place into the future as well. Can anybody indicate that there is planning underway? We are being told that this is going to solve some of the problems, but it will not solve them all. I suppose the question could be asked: should there be a holistic analysis so that we have all of that before us, to know what will be done post these works to address those problems so that we do not end up with a rather expensive bandaid?

Ms Pegrum—I think the truest answer to that is that we are very certain that works on Constitution Avenue need to take place in the short term, and that is agreed with by the ACT government.

Senator FORSHAW—Mr Gill can probably confirm that shortly.

Ms Pegrum—Yes.

Senator FORSHAW—As I understand it that was in your presentation—

Ms Pegrum—It was in the original budget.

Senator FORSHAW—but in your video presentation you just needed future traffic flows that includes those works.

Ms Pegrum—Correct. That included some works at the intersection of Coranderrk Street and Constitution Avenue, and Anzac Parade and Constitution. We would consider those to be critical. There are other ways in which they can be looked at in terms of funding associated with replacement, but that will not fund replacement funding or depreciation. That will not fund all of it and it will not duplicate Constitution. I think the intention is to continue to put forward the traffic in the business model between the governments, both to the Territory government and to the Commonwealth government, and the authority of likely future projects.

Senator FORSHAW—Mr Gill, would you like to comment on that at this stage?

Mr Gill—I can comment that, from the ACT government's point of view, we are broadly very supportive of this project. There are some issues about detail, which we are continuing to discuss with the authority—that is, basically how the intersection operates on a daily basis, how it deals with pedestrians, how it deals with cyclists—but in the broader scheme of things, the Territory is very supportive of it. In terms of your question as to whether this should be looked at holistically, to some extent it is being looked at holistically. From the Territory's point of view, it views the Kings Avenue intersection as part of that east-west corridor that stretches as far back as the New South Wales border and goes as far as Molonglo. We are looking at the traffic impact in the next 10 to 15 years on that corridor. This is an important consideration as part of that. The package of works that you referred to at the airport is the initial package of works that is trying to improve access on that east-west corridor from the city to the airport, but we are also looking at, through a shared funding arrangement with the Commonwealth, improving access from Majura Road to the Monaro Highway, which is that north-south movement. While the work at the airport at the moment will be completed by March-April next year, Easter, we would expect that some major works on the Monaro Highway extending that north and connecting that to Majura Road, would be progressing shortly after that through a shared funding arrangement with the Commonwealth. Discussions with the federal department of infrastructure indicate that that will be progressed and we are making submissions on that basis. So in broad terms there is an overall plan. As for just being a bandaid solution, I think that is harsh.

Senator FORSHAW—Please don't. I was not trying to suggest that that is my view; I was trying to anticipate the sorts of arguments that might occur.

Mr Gill—Yes. In terms of traffic disruption, which is a reasonable point, it probably needs a public information session or the strategy needs to be mindful of the fact that there is likely to be four or five construction projects happening at the same time, and managing that context rather than just a communications strategy talking about Kings Avenue and Russell Drive. That is the approach we would promote in conjunction with the authority.

Senator FORSHAW—Does that mean that we can expect in the next few years to have more projects coming to this committee in terms of those western bottlenecks?

Ms Pegrum—Subject to Commonwealth funding—

Senator FORSHAW—Yes, obviously.

Ms Pegrum—because when the $46.6 million was withdrawn, so was the depreciation for the roads that came forward. We do not have the capacity at the moment to do those intersections, but, as the modelling is showing, their necessity will be evident.

Senator FORSHAW—I am sorry, I was thinking more about the fact that, for those works to be done, it would require approval of this committee because they are within the triangle.

Ms Pegrum—Absolutely.

Mr Smith—The funds required are under the threshold of this committee, yes.

Senator FORSHAW—Which means that we should at least have it in our minds that there is a proposed continuum of projects.

Mr Gill—The authority's projects that the Territory will be progressing will not come to this committee.

Ms Pegrum—No. Subject to the roads remaining under Commonwealth ownership, those projects will come to you.

Senator FORSHAW—Obviously it has been put to us in the submission that this work is proposed and that there are other things that should be done in the future to further alleviate the traffic problems, with growth and that. It is not unusual for this committee to have projects come before it from departments—defence is one—particularly where we are looking at a project but as part of a whole time line of future projects, so it is best to have that on the record.

ACTING CHAIR—As you have allocated pedestrian lights on this crossing, why wouldn't you include a pedestrian underpass in the current proposal?

Mr Smith—The pedestrian underpass along Parkes Way?

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, to save pedestrians crossing at the roadway.

Mr Smith—The generators for pedestrian activity will be, largely, the Russell defence precinct. They are at the elevated position anyway, so it is the authority's desire that they will cross at the higher level across Kings Avenue—I suppose it is down Kings Avenue—and then into the parkland, central Canberra's central parkland.

ACTING CHAIR—So that will still allow unimpeded traffic flow along the east-west corridor?

Mr Smith—Yes, it will. There is provision for cycle access, east-west cycle lanes on Parkes Way, and that has been designed in accordance with the ACT government's standards.

Ms Pegrum—As for the underpass that was proposed some years ago, which is further to the west of this intersection, there is a trunk sewer which is set at such a level that it would be

extremely difficult to affect the underpass. And the nature of the services under this particular work would make it quite difficult to put in an underpass.

ACTING CHAIR—As there are no further questions, I will call Mr Gill. Thank you to the National Capital Authority for appearing before us this morning.

Ms Pegrum—Thank you.

[11.32 am]

GILL, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT

ACTING CHAIR—Mr Gill, your submission notes that 'developments occupied by the Commonwealth will increase traffic congestion in the area'. Could you expand on that for the committee?

Mr Gill—The ACT's position is that development proposed in the Russell area will place additional traffic pressures on roads such as Constitution Avenue. The ACT government is concerned that proposals to upgrade or duplicate that road have moved away in terms of timing. So the ACT government's position is that we would support and encourage this committee to reinvigorate the need to upgrade Constitution Avenue in this context.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you see that as a National Capital Authority responsibility rather than that of the ACT?

Mr Gill—At this point in time, we would see the primary carriage of pushing the need for that upgrade as resting with the National Capital Authority with support from the ACT government.

ACTING CHAIR—Could you explain to me, and for the committee's benefit, the division of responsibility and funding between the NCA and the ACT government?

Mr Gill—As the land manager, the National Capital Authority is responsible for funding anything that happens on national land and the ACT government is responsible for funding any work that occurs on the rest of the Territory, which is territorial land. Our funding sources are the ACT government and the various federal programs that we can secure funding through, whereas I assume that the National Capital Authority is entirely funded by the federal government.

ACTING CHAIR—And how would you rate this particular roundabout in terms of Canberra's most dangerous intersections?

Mr Gill—The Kings Avenue-Parkes Way roundabout has been, for many years, rated in the top five worst intersections in the territory. But solving those road safety concerns can only be achieved by greater separation. There have been works done over the last 10 years, at the margins, funded by the federal government through the federal Black Spot Program for road safety improvement but, to get the substantial improvements which are necessary, by removing the conflict between Kings Avenue and Parkes Way, greater separation is an appropriate solution. This project, as presented, will assist in addressing the road safety issues.

ACTING CHAIR—Is there anything you wish to add to what has been said?

Mr Gill—I will make a few points, just for the record. We are broadly supportive of the project and we have been actively involved in the consultation. This project does address road safety issues at what is a known black spot in the ACT. It will improve travel time on that important east-west corridor, particularly from the airport to the city. But it should not be viewed

in isolation from the rest of that corridor. There are a number of issues of actual detail outstanding that we are discussing with the authority before final sign-off on the traffic management arrangements. They include the signal control of left turning movements. What is proposed at this intersection is not the normal method for controlling left turning arrangements in Canberra. Also, there is the management for safety of pedestrians' and cyclists' movements. These are matters of detail, not issues of broad support.

ACTING CHAIR—No, I understand that.

Mr Gill—There are some issues that result from this project progressing. The capacity of Constitution Avenue is a concern to the territory with the development proposed in the area. We would encourage improvements in the short term in this regard. There are some issues with the roundabout known as the Menindee Drive roundabout, which is the roundabout that provides access to the Boathouse. Are you familiar with that?

ACTING CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Gill—With this proposal, and the easing up of that east-west traffic movement, it would be unfortunate if the heavy right turn that people make to Russell Drive, particularly in the morning peak, basically slows everything up. When you look at the Paramics model that was presented, and you focus on that Menindee Drive roundabout, there are some indications that that could be problematic. We would see that as an issue that the territory would have to monitor, and that would be the territory's responsibility to address. There are a number of solutions that could be progressed, but that is an issue that we see as coming from the analysis. The analysis is fine, but, depending on where you look along that point, there are some different issues.

There will be a lot of fill, earth, that will be excavated as a result of the construction works—in excess of 100,000 cubic metres. That will need to be deposited somewhere in close proximity to the works. The territory is negotiating with the National Capital Authority and the Department of Defence about a suitable site in Majura where we could make use of that material for some works that we are progressing. We have touched on the issue of traffic disruption. I would encourage that any communication strategy basically acknowledge that there are going to be four to five projects happening concurrently, and any communications should be viewed in that context.

ACTING CHAIR—All right. There being no further questions, thank you very much for appearing before us today.

[11.40 am]

ODGERS, Mr Brett James, Chair, Canberra Chapter, Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc.

WEIRICK, Professor James Murray, President, Walter Burley Griffin Society Inc.

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Odgers—Yes. I am also here in the capacity of a concerned and interested Canberra citizen. Apart from postings in Vienna and London, I have lived in Canberra all my life. Growing up in Canberra you know it is a splendidly planned city and you take pride and enjoyment in its growth and its prospects.

In my written submission I pointed out the enduring impact and contemporary relevance of Walter Burley Griffin's plan for Canberra. A key aspect of his plan is that the whole system of landscape, buildings, transport, land use and symbolic layout is integrated and organic. The city should grow with integrity, consistency and harmony.

This works proposal is incongruous. The scale, design, land take, excavations and building construction are out of all proportion to the landscape, the national triangle and the roads system. The proposed structure would bring irreversible damage to the Griffin design.

How can such an inappropriate proposal come forward? The explanation must lie in the relative freedom of the National Capital Authority from basic process checks and balances, external review, independent assessments, environmental impact assessment, cost-benefit analysis, public scrutiny and debate. The summary paragraphs 15 and 22 in my submission conclude that the public interest purposes of the works are contestable. Secondly, no obvious and feasible and less expensive alternatives have been provided to the committee. Thirdly, comprehensive and verified assessments of impacts have not been provided. Thus, no cost-benefit analysis, including comparable solutions, can be furnished, and they have not been furnished. The proponent cannot claim that the estimated cost of $26.6 million is cost effective. Those are my summary comments. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—I would like you to perhaps expand on your comments. I think I am quoting you correctly when you speak of the 'irreparable damage to the design for not only the triangle area but also Canberra in general which would be done by this project to Walter Burley Griffin's original design.'

Mr Odgers—I was using words which Griffin frequently used: organic, harmony, landscape, a balance and growth along consistent guidelines. In Canberra we have a work of art in this sense. It is finely balanced and still has potential. But this particular structure would seem already to disturb the shape of that side of the triangle. It clearly changes vistas. It allows sort of freeway conditions for motorists in an area where there should be a calming of traffic to enable the symbolism and the geometric layout existing in the great triangle and the potential for Constitution Avenue to be realised as the base of the triangle to be fulfilled. I am already

encroaching on matters which I know Professor Weirick is more qualified than I am to comment on. I would like to defer to him.

ACTING CHAIR—In that case, I will seek his opinion. Do you wish to make a statement, Professor Weirick?

Prof. Weirick—Yes. Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before the committee this morning. It is always a very great pleasure to come to the national capital. There are two submissions before you from our society. My colleague Mr Brett Odgers has prepared one on behalf of the Canberra chapter, which is a clear and lucid statement. I have prepared not a supplementary but a separate submission on behalf of the Sydney based management committee, which is a fully documented 40-page submission that builds upon four important policy changes that have taken place since this matter was referred to the committee on 19 March.

As we know, this concept of a Kings Avenue overpass was proposed by the NCA in combination with the duplication of Constitution Avenue. That aspect of the project had already been cut by the Rudd government in February this year. But in June the Minister for Home Affairs, Minister Bob Debus, announced that negotiations were underway with the ACT government to reinstate the duplication of Constitution Avenue. We believe that this has the potential to confuse the issue before the committee today. To overcome the confusion, from our point of view I would like to state that the duplication of Constitution Avenue is a good idea and that the Kings Avenue overpass is a bad idea.

The other important announcement, which was made in July, is that the Chief Minister of the ACT, Mr Jon Stanhope, has put the concept of light rail as the No. 1 priority in terms of infrastructure funding and applications by the ACT government to the Infrastructure Fund for Australia. That puts light rail at the top of the agenda as far as the ACT is concerned, which is a new initiative on behalf of the ACT government.

Later in July, a very important report was furnished by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories into the role of the National Capital Authority. I will perhaps call that the ‘Lundy’ committee report. Among its many recommendations, it supports the idea of the duplication of Constitution Avenue proceeding. It also calls for an integrated, sustainable transport plan for the ACT and to integrate the ACT government and the National Capital Authority, which is an obvious and much needed policy initiative.

Finally, and overarching all of this, in July this year the federal government brought down its green paper in response to the Garnaut report on the issue of the carbon pollution reduction scheme. This has signalled a fundamental change in Australia in all walks of life. Above all, what it means is that the days of business as usual in a car reliant city are over. This proposal for a very large-scale freeway interchange in the central national area comes at a very crucial stage in our nation’s history.

I have prepared a presentation. It will take me about 10 minutes to give. We can see from the material already before the committee that it is a highly complex matter, so forgive me for taking some time.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Prof. Weirick—As representatives of the Walter Burley Griffin Society, the first thing that we want to make absolutely clear is that this idea has nothing to do with Walter Burley Griffin. Although the proposal is known as the Griffin Legacy implementation scheme, in Griffin's original plans, as they emerged from 1911 through to 1918, the central parklands of the federal capital were an all-important public resource.

The NCA's own analysis has shown that today the Parkes Way goes through the middle of the park that Griffin proposed, also taking out many of the great national institutions and civic amenities which he proposed, including the national theatre, the national opera, the national stadium and so on. So this has nothing to do with Walter Burley Griffin.

Parkes Way was constructed, as was presented earlier today, by the National Capital Development Commission in the first five years of its existence on the advice of Sir William Holford and it is entirely a creation of post-Second World War Australia. This proposal by the National Capital Authority to have large-scale urban development between Constitution Avenue and Parkes Way is, again, a further deviation—a very significant and irreversible deviation—from the Griffin plan and any possibility of this being a site of public parklands, national institutions and civic amenities as Griffin intended.

Therefore, what we would propose is that we should not use the term Griffin Legacy and we should call this what it is: the NCA central national area redevelopment scheme, as has been proposed from 2004 to date. This represents a very large redevelopment by any standards. The total figure which has been put forward by the NCA is not 500,000 square metres and not one million square metres, but 1,845,000 square metres. On Constitution Avenue itself it is one million square metres, but that does not include City Hill and the West Basin development. So when we consider this interchange we need to know that it is not a simple road intersection; it is a very complex urban development proposal that has to be considered in many ways.

Let us start with the traffic proposition. Here in the NCA's own amendment, as approved to the National Capital Plan, amendment 60, there is a diagram of the indicative road structure. This already shows the issue which separates our understanding of what is being proposed from what is on the table today. If we look at this graphic we can see that, in terms of a hierarchy, we have main avenues, major streets and local streets. Parkes Way is considered to be a main avenue in the same way as Commonwealth Avenue, Kings Avenue and Constitution Avenue are. You will also notice that the major street, Coranderrk Street, is brought down to Parkes Way at a T-intersection in this proposal. You will also notice that Blamey Crescent in Campbell is also brought down to meet Parkes Way at a T-intersection. We know how important Coranderrk Street is as an access to Civic and, indeed, Anzac Parade is a vital part of the overall circulation system of Canberra. Here is a diagram prepared by Tony Powell. It indicates very importantly the relationship between Coranderrk Street and Barry Drive, coming down to Clunies Ross Street, and the larger relationships of Anzac Parade and Limestone Avenue across ultimately towards Belconnen. These are very important parts of the overall metropolitan network of this city.

When we move to the east, we reach the all-important issue of the airport and indeed beyond, as was mentioned by the representative of the ACT government today. Let us just look at the Civic-Canberra airport connection as it exists. Leaving aside the new entry to the airport, which is now almost complete, there are 12 intersections all the way across to the other side of the

ANU. At the moment, Canberra airport access roads are subject to a $60 million upgrade—$30 million of which is federal funds. The design of this scheme is not readily accessible as a public document, but here we have, from a 2006 report, a series of works which are currently in construction as we come in from the airport today. What do they include? Stage 2 is traffic signals on these roundabouts. So, if we go back to where we were, the T-intersection at Coranderrk Street will have to have traffic signals and the T-intersection at Blamey Crescent will have to have traffic signals—traffic signals all the way to the airport. It is absolutely absurd to have a freeway interchange between traffic signals.

Here is an overlay that I have done of the NCA's material on the current proposal. This slide shows a very large workload of road construction. It is very much larger than what was presented to the people of this city in 2004. This shows the type of artist's impression that the NCA has gone to the public with, with their various materials. Here we can see this interchange depicted as a mere incident in the Canberra landscape. But it has grown into a giant octopus of concrete. And the giant octopus does not even work as a traffic intersection. This slide shows Kings Avenue, with an extremely complex series of on-ramps and right turns, controlled by 22 traffic signals. We can see from this geometry that the possibility of coming up the ramp, turning right and not quite getting the right entrance and going down the exit ramp the wrong way and into the traffic is distinct. So, in addition to all of the other poles, lights and so forth there is going to have to be four very large signs saying: 'Stop. Go Back. Wrong Way.' I think those signs could be adopted as the metaphor for this entire project: 'Stop. Go Back. Wrong Way.' This is not the way to solve the issues of the roundabout at Russell.

This is a Google Earth image of part of the Parliamentary Triangle. You can see that it was taken on a working day; all of the car parks are full. It is perhaps about 11 o'clock. About five cars can be seen in this interchange. The problem with this interchange exists for the morning and perhaps the afternoon peak. None of the technical material that has been presented to the committee today forms part of the original National Capital Authority submission to this committee. There is no technical appendix, no data and no figures whatsoever for any independent critical analysis of the type of engineering studies that have been put on the table today. We know that accidents happen at this roundabout. The figure of approximately 500 accidents over about five years is posted on the NCA website, and I think another figure was presented this morning. What has not been put before you is the number of car movements that take place through this intersection. Let us assume there are 25,000 to 30,000 car movements a day. Over five years that is 50 million car movements. So 500 car accidents in 50 million movements equals an accident rate of one in a million. The Society does not want in any way to minimise the suffering of people in these car accidents, but it must be put in a national perspective. Here is a 2006 analysis of traffic accidents around Australia. What we can see is that Canberra has markedly lower fatalities and markedly lower total costs of traffic accidents than anywhere else in Australia—and, of course, dramatically lower than the Northern Territory or Western Australia. Canberra also has greater vehicle use. So, in this car-reliant city, we have a higher motor vehicle use and a markedly lower accident rate than the rest of Australia. So, in terms of public policy, should $26.6 million of taxpayers' funds be expended on solving yet another self-created problem in Canberra? And, believe me, this is a self-created problem.

The National Capital Authority and its predecessor, the National Capital Planning Authority, embarked upon a major reconstruction of the Russell defence precinct in the early 1990s. This matter came before the Public Works Committee in 1994-95 and the amendment to the National

Capital Plan was considered at the same time by the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories. This proposed what the authority thought was a Griffin idea but was more or less their idea to put geometric roads on top of the NCDC master plan. They happily proposed to demolish major defence assets including the then recently constructed Defence Signals Directorate—also perhaps it is building 7 these days with the former canteen recently refurbished, of course, as the childcare centre. So of course none of this has happened. What we have is an awkward combination of geometric roads, the NCDC service roads of the 1950s and pragmatic ad hoc relationships between the two.

In the current proposal of the amendment to the National Capital Plan, the Defence Signals Directorate remains—it is not going to be demolished anymore—but again awkward adjustments have had to be made to the road intersection. However, the reconstruction of Russell Drive is still here as a proposal and that means taking out this major building at this location and the childcare centre and it also means moving this roundabout about 50 metres to the east. Of course, all these cars are coming into these large surface car parks at the peak time of the morning, all backing up and causing all sorts of strange manoeuvrings in addition to the other movements that are taking place in this area at this time.

The other, of course, self-created problem by the NCA is that, since the late 1990s, it has approved a series of master plans for the airport. That has had a very significant effect upon the distribution of employment in the ACT. Back in 1994 the then NCPA presented to the joint standing committee on the national capital their estimate of what the traffic would look like in 2016—this is at the am peak. It would be very helpful for the NCA to present us with comparable information today and to analyse how they got it wrong or what has happened to change it from what was anticipated 15 years ago. One area where it has indeed gone wrong is from the available information to do with the airport upgrade. If we just look at the mid-block traffic movements on Morshead Drive, we can see that the NCA had anticipated by 2016 only a minor eastward flow and it has already increased 327 per cent. This is caused by the creation of a business park, previously unplanned for in this city, and, of course, a retail outlet. This is a self-created problem which is now requiring public money to help solve.

What we do not have from the NCA is any serious options, as my colleague Mr Brett Odgers stated. It was put on the table today that the NCA had considered a do-nothing option and it had considered an on-grade signalised solution. Neither of those solutions is presented in this report and yet there is quite obviously a straightforward answer to this problem, which is what you would find in any other city in this country or any other city in the world. You can reduce the complexity of the roundabout. There are plenty of complex roundabouts in the world—the one around the Arc de Triomphe is pretty amazing and handles a lot of traffic—or you could have a simple four-way signalised intersection. The issues that are underway here are part of the larger redevelopment of central Canberra and that goes to the issue of the cost of this development and the opportunities for cost recovery as part of the redevelopment process.

The Griffin Legacy Forum was mentioned earlier today. This is the memorandum of understanding signed between the Commonwealth government and the ACT government on 6 December 2006. Here is an extract from it the statement of mutual benefits:

The Griffin Legacy propositions will deliver benefits to the Commonwealth government, the ACT government and the Canberra community, including increased land value with a high rate of return on public investment to both the Australian and ACT governments.

It says that there will be 'focused growth along Constitution Avenue corridor, with a more efficient use of existing infrastructure'. But what is clearly presented in this report is that the business case on which this has been prepared has separated what they call trunk infrastructure from precinct infrastructure. What they mean is not exactly defined, but trunk infrastructure we conclude to be infrastructure for which no money will ever be recaptured by the government. Precinct infrastructure costs will be captured from the developers.

So what is the trunk infrastructure? We know that Kings Avenue overpass is $26.6 million. Whether or not this is $46.5 million has been clarified today. I think perhaps it is. So already it is up to $73 million to include Constitution Avenue duplication. This report announces that 'filling in of West Basin to create waterfront real estate is part of the trunk infrastructure'. It says that these three things are only included in the trunk infrastructure. So does it include the reconstruction of Coranderrk Street roundabout? Does it include the reconstruction of Constitution Avenue as it passes over Parkes Way, which is part of this proposal? Does it includes the 400-metre wide land bridge over the Tuggeranong expressway at Acton? At a conservative estimate, we are talking about infrastructure investment of $100 million to $150 million which, presumably, will never be recaptured by the government.

This development does not look as good when you start analysing it as it does in these brochures. One of the problems that the Commonwealth government has to face is that the national land is concentrated on the western end of Constitution Avenue. This slide is from a different source, but this shows the national land around the Russell precinct which was changed at the time of amendment 12 to the National Capital Plan. We are here today because this sector was changed to national land at that time and now they want to change it back to road. Otherwise, it would all be dealt with by the ACT government. However, the ACT government are the principal beneficiary of this whole development. They have most of the undeveloped land, where the increase in value can be captured, in addition to long-term leaseholders in this area.

The national land is all zoned for national capital use. As everyone in this room knows, the Department of Finance and Deregulation has had a long project underway to look at section 49 in Parkes to use this for the ASIO-ONA central office. I think we can be fairly confident that that is not going to be sold to the private sector. So the possibility of capturing the value of one of the prime pieces of real estate in this city, looking over out over Lake Burley Griffin, will never happen. We will have a high-security federal institution located on Constitution Avenue. We could talk more about this project, but I will move on.

The proposition is that all of this western part of Constitution Avenue will be funded by the Commonwealth. The extent to which the private sector will be involved in it is problematic. The opportunity of getting back from developers the cost of development is a matter which can only be negotiated between government departments, which will be a very interesting exercise in itself.

ACTING CHAIR—Before you go on, Professor Weirick, I do appreciate your very full treatment of the topic, but we are limited for time and Senator Forshaw and I would like to ask questions. So perhaps you could wrap up your presentation.

Prof. Weirick—I will try to wrap it up.

ACTING CHAIR—I do appreciate that.

Prof. Weirick—I will take three to four minutes.

ACTING CHAIR—That will be fine.

Prof. Weirick—This is a very large development. It is about 210,000 square metres and involves perhaps 10,000 workers. To indicate to the committee the size of this, you recently had before you the fit-out of a building over in west Civic. It is 40,000 square metres and houses 2½ thousand people. It is a big building on the western side of the CBD. It stands next to the biggest master plan that is in construction in this city at the moment—178,300 square metres—the ANU Exchange. The central national area redevelopment of the NCA is more than 10 times the size of the largest redevelopment that is taking place at the moment in Civic. This includes 913,000 square metres of commercial space, which is as much as existed in 2004 in the city, Russell, the airport, Belconnen and Woden. If we put it in at one to 20 per square metre it is 45,000 workers. If we shoehorned people in at the rate that DEEWR want to put people into their fit-out, at 15.5, it is 60,000.

ACTING CHAIR—That is fine but I think we are veering off the central topic, which is the consideration of the roundabout.

Prof. Weirick—I am coming to that. There are also 14,000 residents as well as 45,000 workers. There is no way that the traffic system can address that concentration of numbers if you build a freeway into the centre of the city. What has to happen is either integrated transport information systems or calming the whole system down. It has to be turned into an urban avenue or an urban boulevard with traffic lights, and the people of Canberra have got to be prepared to stop occasionally at traffic lights.

That is what this proposal really entails. When you factor in the light rail route you can see that it has to be the case. If the light rail route or the other transportation route comes down the reconstructed Russell Drive, there will have to be a traffic light there. To have a freeway for less than a kilometre which would speed up traffic for 20 seconds at 80 kilometres per hour is just ridiculous.

The sustainable future of Canberra has been known for many, many years. There was a wonderful study done back in 1991 by Newman and Kenworthy. The NCA themselves have analysed Griffin's plans and seen how he was proposing to put tramways down the avenues. They have not put tramways down the avenues of their proposed duplication of Constitution Avenue. They are creating incredibly ugly traffic interchanges on Anzac Parade, in the middle of the ceremonial centre of the main axis of the city. This proposal is a very misguided proposition from beginning to end.

I have three final points. Heritage has come up, in addition to the trees here. This is a great modernist landscape of the NCDC. It was compromised by the removal of those original buildings and what has been built instead but, still, this is all of a piece—the roads, the roundabouts, the bridges, the lake and the Carillon; it all has the aesthetics of the mid-20th century. Any good heritage assessment would have to ascribe value to this. But what happens is that heritage site is defined in a very perverse way. This is the so-called Parliament House vista, but it does not include what you see from Parliament House. It is an arbitrarily constructed line which cuts out Kings Avenue itself and cuts out the Australian American memorial—that is not in the Parliament House vista—and the Defence headquarters and the backdrop of Mount Pleasant. So this is of course ludicrous fiction.

There is a problem with the environment, not mentioning the number of trees that are coming out from the middle of this. There is the issue of the excavation and where the fill is going. It says here that it is going to a suitable site. The suitable site that the NCA has is Lake Burley Griffin. They propose to fill in Lake Burley Griffin. Is this a cut-and-fill exercise? It is certainly not a matter that is in this report, and there is no supporting environmental documentation. The services that have to be reconstructed are immense. Because of the scale of this excavation, not only stormwater, power, water and sewer have to be reconstructed; all of the defence communications have to be reconstructed.

To conclude, this is a very compromised solution. We put forward a series of 10 recommendations but, in a nutshell, what we are saying is that this project should not proceed. There are better alternatives and they should be fully examined and put before the committee. Thank you so much.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. Senator Forshaw has some questions.

Senator FORSHAW—Your presentation is very detailed, and I think I would like to hear a response from the NCA, either today or in a written submission, to a lot of what you have put forward. We will come to that shortly. But I have a couple of questions. On the road accident comparisons, you put up a table which compared the ACT to all the other states and the Northern Territory.

Prof. Weirick—Yes.

Senator FORSHAW—There were two accidents per week or whatever it was. The NCA have said to us that they have measured it over four or five years at this intersection. I would have thought it would be more appropriate to do a comparison of that figure with either another city or another local government area in another state with a similar number of people and maybe with some comparative intersections. I recall looking at some road projects where I live, in Sydney, New South Wales, where lower accident figures than that have resulted in the necessity to do major works to reconfigure roundabouts in particular. I do not know if you have any comparative statistics on that, because, frankly, I have to say that I find a comparison of one intersection, and then extrapolating that out over the whole country on the basis of what the ACT figures are as against the NT, WA and New South Wales, does not really help me. But I did want to ask you this question. You said that this is a massive change to this intersection. Is it actually a bigger area in terms of the footprint compared to the current roundabout? You describe this as a freeway; I have a different concept of what a freeway is. A freeway is not normally a couple of

hundred metres of through traffic under an overpass or over an underpass. I would just like you to focus on that, because I do not know whether you are overstating it by calling it a freeway or whether, at the end of the day, the actual area of the construction is a bigger footprint than what the current roundabout is.

Prof. Weirick—Thank you. There are several questions there. First of all, on the footprint, I think that the NCA should answer that, because they have not done an accurate overlay of the full construction in this material. But it would appear to be impinging upon what they had previously designated as building sites in this amendment. It would appear that at the time this was prepared it was assumed they could do a smaller interchange. There were three questions. What was the second one?

Senator FORSHAW—You were calling it a freeway.

Prof. Weirick—It is freeway standard construction—that is, it has entry ramps and exit ramps and grade separation of movement. Of course, Parkes Way underneath is not a freeway; it is only a tiny fragment of a confused arterial which has roundabouts and traffic lights and other things proposed. So what is needed, as we included in our recommendations, is a consistent design of the whole corridor and so forth—

Senator FORSHAW—I understand that part of it.

Prof. Weirick—to calm the traffic down to a proper urban standard. That goes back to the issue of the accidents in this intersection. What is needed is a very good analysis of those accidents. One of the reasons why roundabouts are proposed in the first place is that they reduce the severity of accidents. We would need to know what time of the day these accidents take place and the nature of these accidents. From the available information, most of them appear to be rear-end accidents. We would also need to know how many are serious accidents and whether there have in fact been fatalities on this intersection. If there had been fatalities, I think that information would be available. Apparently there have been some serious accidents, but I would be interested to know whether in fact there have been fatalities.

My point was not to compare the performance of this interchange to the state wide figures but to raise the question of public policy. Should this type of investment take place in the ACT, which is such a privileged place, with the best roads in the whole of Australia, or are there greater needs in other places? It was in that context that I was putting forward that recent research by Connelly and Supangan.

Senator FORSHAW—You also referred to the possibility of light rail. I assume you are not suggesting that light rail go down Parkes Way, but I think you mentioned Constitution Avenue. The NCA has put to us: 'There's already major traffic congestion at this point. Here is a way to solve it or at least reduce it. There need to be other works done in the future.' If nothing is done at this intersection, what prospect is there of improving the traffic flow or at least not making it worse as development occurs? It is one thing to say light rail is going to come and another thing to actually see it happen.

Prof. Weirick—Correct. I agree.

Senator FORSHAW—We have been talking about that in Sydney for so long it is not funny, although we have a little bit of it down at Darling Harbour.

Prof. Weirick—I fully appreciate the question. The issue of light rail is a complex one. Canberra faces a dilemma. Its major metropolitan plan from the seventies was based upon the disposition of employment in different areas and having equal cross-flows across the metropolitan area. Since the eighties development has been concentrated in the CBD, which has created recent levels of congestion. This development will irreversibly concentrate commercial and residential development in the centre of the city. There are three conflicts here: the symbolic centre of our national capital and what it should be; a traffic sewer, which is what is being designed here; and a huge amount of development. The only way to resolve that is to not overdevelop it to start with and then to change the concept of the traffic—to not try to design a freeway but to bring the speed of the traffic down and have a network with a diffuse distribution of flows. That is why you would have Constitution Avenue and Parkes Way as equal so that they share the load. The traffic will just have to stop, as they stop along Anzac Parade in Moore Park or along Royal Parade or St Kilda Road in Melbourne. Great urban boulevards handle a lot of traffic, and a city grows as a modern metropolis in that way. Trying to maintain the illusion that you can cruise through the centre of Canberra at 80 ks whenever you like and say, 'Please give us more federal funds to do it,' is not a proposition that the rest of Australia can support.

Senator FORSHAW—I could go back to your submission but I will just ask you: is your preferred solution to keep the current arrangement with a roundabout and to have traffic lights installed?

Prof. Weirick—I do not know which is the optimum solution because I do not have the expertise of the NCA to put that forward. However, there would appear to be no proposal which involves removing the roundabout in Anzac Parade. That seems to be part of the ceremonial idea of the central axis of Canberra. If that roundabout can work, can't we get the roundabout to work here? Perhaps we reduce the complexity. Perhaps we cut off the access straight up Kings Avenue to Russell and bring cars in from Blamey Crescent, Russell Drive and Northcott Drive over the top of the ridge. There are other ways to do it. If the roundabout itself proves to be impossible because of the gap that is needed for the brief peak times, what is wrong with a simple four-way intersection? Plenty of cities deal with a lot of traffic at four-way intersections.

Senator FORSHAW—But wouldn't that change the character as it is at the moment? If you move away from a roundabout to an intersection, you might well argue that that is a more desirable, but not ideal, result than completely removing the roundabout and bringing in an overpass and slipways and so on.

Prof. Weirick—Believe me, this proposal is going to change the character of Canberra forever. What we are going to see are 50 buildings like the DEWHA headquarters across the parliamentary triangle. It is not going to be a landscape anymore; it is going to be Barry Drive.

Senator FORSHAW—I think we appreciate and respect the nature of your submission. This may be something that you would argue should be looked at it in the whole rather than by segments, but what we have before us is a single project with respect to this intersection.

Prof. Weirick—I appreciate that.

Senator FORSHAW—I could not help but notice your reference to the Arc de Triomphe. If you watched the Tour de France as much as I did on TV, you would have seen that you actually approach the Champs-Elysees by going through a tunnel. But, anyway, I will leave it at that.

Prof. Weirick—They are very dangerous too, those tunnels in Paris.

Senator FORSHAW—They also have roundabouts with lights on them.

ACTING CHAIR—Similar to Senator Forshaw, I would like to take issue with your description of the underpass, as it were, from east to west as a freeway. I am assuming that it is not a freeway in the true sense of the word—that is, a long, uninterrupted stretch of road with comparatively high speed limits. I am assuming—and we will put this on notice as a question—that there will be a sufficiently low level of speed limits imposed on this for cars to be operating in a calm manner in between sets of road lights.

The other point that I would like to put to you is that I think that we have to accept that what we are dealing with in 2008 is Canberra as it exists at the moment. I assure you that I have a great reverence for the legacy of Walter Burley Griffin and his legacy is something that I would like to see kept in the spirit of Canberra as much as possible. Nevertheless, the fact now exists that we have a developing industrial park at and beyond the airport, we have development to the north of Canberra and we have an expanding population not only in Civic but in the suburbs beyond. Now, that traffic flow must be dealt with. I mean, it is not only the bridge; it is the type of intersection that is being created so that speed is controlled by the traffic lights, which will make people stop and think. Also, the scope of the bridge will be contained within the site of the present roundabout—that is, it will not be intruding on that landscape to a sufficient degree. Again, that is something that we will put back to the NCA as a question on notice and it is something that we will query. I also wanted to ask you for the basis for your statement that the NCA proposes to fill the north shore of West Basin at Acton to create waterfront real estate. Do you have a basis for that statement?

Prof. Weirick—That is clearly stated in amendment 61 to the National Capital Plan. This document does not say that that is where they are going to put the fill but it says that it is going to be put at a 'suitable site' and then relocated. So they have a need for fill in that location, but they have not done any environmental analysis if that is where they are going to put it.

ACTING CHAIR—But in the absence of a statement to the contrary you are supposing that that is where they are going to put it.

Prof. Weirick—That is the way that a good engineer would go about a project of this nature. You would have a simple, haul-cut-fill relationship. But that honest statement is not on the table.

ACTING CHAIR—Again, that is something that we need to query with the NCA. Thank you very much for your submission; it has been most interesting. I thank you for your appearance before the committee today.

Prof. Weirick—Thank you.

Ms Pegrum—Madam Acting Chair, there are so many significant issues that have been raised in the last evidence—

ACTING CHAIR—Yes. Please wait until you come to the table.

Senator FORSHAW—Professor Weirick, would it be possible for you to provide us with print-outs of the relevant parts of your presentation?

Prof. Weirick—Yes, I will leave them here for the officers to print out.

Senator FORSHAW—That would be excellent.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you.

Senator FORSHAW—You are happy for those to become part of the public record?

Prof. Weirick—Yes, I am certainly happy. I have endeavoured to cite all the sources which—

Senator FORSHAW—Yes, I noticed that you did that.

ACTING CHAIR—We understand that. Thank you. We will now have a short private meeting.

[12.32 pm]

ABBAS SAYED, Dr Khaled, Principal Transport Planner, Consultant, National Capital Authority

HILL, Ms Jennifer, Heritage Specialist, Consultant, National Capital Authority

JACOBSEN, Mr Lindsay Kristian, Traffic Engineer, Consultant, National Capital Authority

PEGRUM, Ms Annabelle Nicole, Chief Executive, National Capital Authority

PILTON, Mr Adrian Duncan, Consultant Technical Team Director and Architect, National Capital Authority

SMITH, Mr Andrew Douglas, Acting Managing Director, Projects, National Capital Authority

WAITE, Mr Philip Anthony, Director, Construction and Procurement, National Capital Authority

ACTING CHAIR—The committee has resolved that we would like to call back the NCA for a very short period, during which we will ask them to make a brief statement on the record, as part of a public hearing, to respond to some of the statements contained in the previous submission. We will also be asking them to make a supplementary submission to the committee which will be considered at our next committee meeting. Welcome.

Ms Pegrum—In no particular order for the committee, we want to address some of the issues. Professor Weirick has been a little bit selective in the references he has made to the Griffin Legacy itself, but I simply state that for the record. I also appreciate that the Walter Burley Griffin Society has not been entirely supportive of the amendments to the National Capital Plan that were put in place over a year ago. However, I have to say that those amendments were subject to statutory consultation and considerable parliamentary scrutiny, and they now are matter of legislation within the National Capital Plan. Those amendments support the level of development that has been proposed or shown as having potential both in our own submissions and in Professor Weirick's.

At the time that these two infrastructure initiatives—that is, Constitution Avenue and the overpass at Parkes Way—were originally put to government, there were, of course, as part of the usual budget processes, extremely detailed business cases and the usual scrutiny by the relevant departments of the Commonwealth in making recommendations to government. That business case is available, but I would make that available to the committee in camera. It supported the original proposal for this overpass. I point out that there have also been significant technical assessments undertaken by our consultants, who were selected through appropriate processes associated with procurement and are experts in their field. You have heard some of that evidence

and you have other evidence in confidence to the committee. If you wish for further technical advice on the merits of the proposal, that is available to you.

I should also point out that contemporary urban consideration of sustainable development supports consolidation rather than continued urban sprawl. Canberra has a history of having pushed out some of its development into towns and town centres and that has created transport sustainability issues in the longer term. There was a general consensus, which was supported in the amendments themselves, that consolidation in the centre of Canberra was appropriate and, indeed, a very good thing, and a mixed type of development.

In addition, there have been a number of other, I suppose, fringe statements made today that I would like to set aside. The authority does not approve the master plan to the airport. The authority states whether or not a master plan is inconsistent with the National Capital Plan. The Airports Act 1996 established an airport controller. The department of transport and regional services has within it an area that looks at master planning and there was a whole policy regime around divestment of airports. The fact is that urban consolidation is considered to be a good thing from a sustainability aspect not only in Australia but throughout the world, that the airport has been divested and that the nature of airports has changed throughout Australia and that, whilst there has been a recommendation in a recent inquiry in relation to a sustainable transport and traffic study to be done by the territory and the authority, this proposal is entirely within the agreed overall transport network for Canberra and has been agreed with the territory and supported by them. It is very evident that the need for this overpass is now and not in some distant time in the future.

I would also like to say that we would all like to live in an ideal world where there were billions of dollars to build all of the infrastructure that you needed at one time. That is not the reality in not only Canberra but most Australian cities and, I would suggest, the majority of other developed cities in the world. This is a first measure, and we have been frank about the extent to which it can address the current traffic concerns. I certainly am not questioning the experts who have nominated this as a significant blackspot. I think we take that as granted. I would not support a bad accident record in other urban areas of Australia as a benchmark for the national capital. I think we should consider the graphs that were shown by Professor Weirick as evidence that Canberra does have a good record, and we should keep it that way. This work is essential to do that.

It was described as an octopus. I find that offensive to the designers of this proposal. It is a very elegant proposal and, if they have an opportunity, I would like them to address some of the design considerations that they took into account. I also do not believe that it is appropriate for the authority to question the extent of listing under a Commonwealth or national heritage listing. Parliament House vista is as described by Professor Weirick. If that were to be changed, that would be a completely separate process and should not, in our view, impact on the extent of heritage consideration—which has been extensive—given to this particular proposal.

There is no intention to use the fell from this at West Basin. The West Basin reclamation and redevelopment was one of the amendments to the National Capital Plan. That means that it is possible in planning terms but it does not guarantee that anything will happen. There is no funding from the Commonwealth and, to my very best knowledge, from the territory, whose land West Basin is, to reclaim that area. If I could just make that very clear at this time.

The secure precinct associated with Russell, ASIO and the other Commonwealth buildings east and west of Anzac Parade is a reality of our times and an important one in the consideration of this intersectional work for appropriate access to a very important series of Commonwealth departmental areas that have very much a 24/7 pattern of usage and also to afford more appropriate access into the recreational areas of the parks.

The Anzac Parade intersection that was shown in relation to Constitution Avenue has been considered as a principle. There is no decision by the authority at this time to proceed on that design. We are extremely conscious of the fact that Anzac Parade is on the national list, and any consideration for changes there would be subject to referral under EPBC and, I would suggest, subject to the quantum of funds associated with it and subject to this committee's consideration as well.

Professor Weirick made the comment that what should be approached is a calming of traffic; in other words, a slowing down. Again, if I could just make reference to the very detailed work that has been done on this by very reputable professionals. If this work is not done, you will not get a calming down; you will get a drop-dead in traffic movement within the centre of our national capital, and that is not an acceptable way to go into the future. If I could just ask the designers to make a short comment.

Mr Pilton—I am from Johnson Pilton Walker. We are the architects, urban designers and landscape architects for the project. From an architectural point of view, this response is an integrated design from a wide number of professional disciplines—architecture, urban design, landscape, traffic engineering, structural engineering and so on. It might be fair to say that, from a purely urban design point of view—ignoring traffic and all that kind of thing—we would have preferred to have put in two separate bridges, similar to the bridges on the way up to this parliament, but it is not a feasible solution or an efficient solution when we consider all of the disciplines involved and the traffic, safety and so on.

The design itself has clearly been derived from all of those things together. We have the curved walls. We are providing a gateway into Canberra from the airport. This marks the sort of urban area of Canberra, if you like. It is a gateway, and that is why we have used very high-quality precast concrete on the curved walls. It will be lit at night to form a gateway. It is a very efficient, simple design. We have tried to treat Parkes Way as a continuation of a natural, loose sort of landscape, whereas, with Kings Avenue, there are elm trees there which have been dying because they are just not suited to the climate and the soils in that area, so we are replacing those with native vegetation and bringing back and emphasising the vista up towards Russell.

Senator FORSHAW—Do you have a model of this?

Ms Pegrum—I was just going to table a photo montage showing the way in which the vista would look.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you.

Senator FORSHAW—But do you actually have a physical model?

Mr Smith—Not at this time. We have photo montages, we have the drawings, but we do not have a physical model.

Ms Pegrum—The only modelling is the Griffin Legacy model at the exhibition, but that is just showing yellow constructions, not the actual physical design. Certainly the scale would be comparable.

Senator FORSHAW—I would have thought it might have been of assistance—rather than just look at the drawings or even a photo—to actually have a scale model of the works.

ACTING CHAIR—I dare to suggest that it might be of assistance during the public consultation mode.

Ms Pegrum—Certainly.

Senator FORSHAW—It is particularly hard because people are talking about a vista and—

Ms Pegrum—I would be very happy to agree that, as part of the EPBC referral, we make available a model, and I am very confident in the quality and the scale of the design being proposed.

Senator FORSHAW—That is providing we approve it.

Ms Pegrum—Providing you approve it.

Senator FORSHAW—Let's not draw any conclusions just yet.

Ms Pegrum—Could I ask Ms Hill to brief you. She is our heritage consultant on the project.

Ms Hill—I think there are a couple of issues here that are important to stress. Kings Avenue is significant as one of the key projects of the NCDC period, but it reinforces the original Griffin principles. What it did do is impose this new modernist landscape according to Holford, which was previously mentioned, and that is also recognised as having some value.

Parkes Way in a sense was also designed in the fifties. It was in response to the traffic problems that existed then. It actually partially undermined the principles of the Griffin triangle. It was originally considered to be implemented as a separated grade, which would have allowed Kings Avenue to continue through at the same level. From our research, for budgetary reasons, that was not able to occur and, as a result, the roundabout which exists at the moment occurred in its place.

The Griffin Legacy attempts to reinforce Kings Avenue. In this particular situation I think what is proposed reinforces what the original Griffin principle proposed in terms of the dominance of Kings Avenue and what the NCDC proposed in terms of a separated grade to reinforce that dominance. In that context it actually produces positive benefits, whereas, at the moment, although the current roundabout is part of a wider NCDC program, it actually dissipates the impact of the axis. In fact, it is separated at grade, and I think you can see that quite clearly on the montage. You will actually get a reinforcement of the access that continues

through with tree planting. Although it is outside the scope of this particular project, it would then continue logically through into the Russell precinct so that you are able to reinforce more strongly Kings Avenue right through to the apex with Constitution Avenue. So the roundabout itself has a lot less significance, because it came about for budgetary reasons. The fact that it is modified I think has less impact certainly in terms of the original Griffin principles but also in terms of a really important component of the NCDC work.

ACTING CHAIR—If there is anything further that you would like to add to that as part of a supplementary submission, I would encourage you to do so.

Senator FORSHAW—I might be a bit forceful and say that I would like you to read the *Hansard*, and if the committee can supply you with the graphs and the details of Professor Weirick's submission, particularly, you could address any of the points in there that you have not dealt with this morning.

Ms Pegrum—We would be delighted to do that. I am very grateful for being permitted to come back to the table too. Thank you for your time.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you for your submission and your work today.

Senator FORSHAW—You are going to provide us with some additional material, some of which you said has to be in confidence because it relates to costings and—

Ms Pegrum—And also to some infrastructure issues.

Senator FORSHAW—Thank you.

Resolved (on motion by **Senator Forshaw**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 12.47 pm