

Inquiry into Draft Variation No: 345 Mawson Group Centre  
The Committee Secretary, Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal,  
Legislative Assembly for the ACT,  
GPO Box 1020, CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Email: LACommitteePUR@parliament.act.gov.au

6 September 2018

Dear Madam Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to present at the Committee's hearing on Monday 3rd September 2018. I understand the opportunity for submissions to the Inquiry have closed, but wish to take this opportunity, not to make a further submission but to clarify some matters which may not have been fully understood by Committee members. I feel this is necessary as an article appearing in the Canberra Times on Tuesday 4th September 2018 and still available on its web site, has presumably reviewed the transcript of the statements I made to the Committee and have totally misunderstood my comments.

For the purposes of clarification:

- Argos, the Crown Lessees of the property tenanted by the Woolworths supermarket and another commercial property within the Mawson Group Centre, do not oppose the development of an Aldi supermarket in Mawson. In fact, I am sure that a review of the transcript of the hearing will confirm that I supported such development. There is no "supermarket war" as stated by the Canberra Times.
- We agree with submissions made by Aldi, that the best site for a supermarket is at the southern end of the Mawson Group Centre, on the car park adjacent to the Tennis Courts (part Block 25 Section 47). The feasibility of this development could be enhanced by allowing a mixed-use development together with direct access to Athllon Drive.
- As Crown lessees of a small retail premises in the Mawson Group Centre (in addition to the Woolworths site), we do not share the views expressed by the Chief Planner, as reported in the Canberra Times, that a supermarket at the southern end will detract from the retail offer in the established part of the Group Centre. We encourage Committee members to visit the Chisholm Group Centre, where an Aldi supermarket has been established at the rear of the centre and has not adversely affected the patronage of the retail offer in the centre.

- I advised the Committee that I felt that the development of the Mawson site adjacent to the licensed clubs (Block 6 Section 57) for a supermarket, as proposed by EPSDD, is not the best outcome for the centre. The Canberra Times have misconstrued this as me being opposed to an Aldi. This is not the case. I am concerned that Committee members may also have misunderstood my position. I am only opposed to the development of Block 6 Section 57 for a supermarket as it will result in a poor urban design outcome for the centre, resulting in poor interface, conflicts with access to the licensed clubs and the need for a supermarket to have loading docks, waste areas and significant blank walls.
- We note the Chief Planner's comments, as reported in the Canberra Times, that basement parking is an acceptable form of parking for commercial centres. In principle, we agree with this, but it must be heavily qualified against the level of shopping experience of the customer. Any development of the site adjacent to the licensed clubs and will require two levels of basement parking (one to replace the existing parking and one to provide parking for the new development). Two levels of parking maybe acceptable where the shopping experience is over a longer period. This occurs in Town Centres where customers park some distance from the shops and visit a number of shops, often throughout the course of a morning or afternoon. This can also be successful in more concentrated Group Centres (e.g. Manuka, Dickson) where the shopping experience wider and is also likely to be over a longer period.
- However, for suburban group centres, like Mawson, the customers are predominately people who seek to park close to the retail premises that they will be visiting and occasionally undertake incidental shopping at other premises as they pass by. The convenience of the parking in such suburban centres is paramount to the success of the small-scale retail offer.
- It's important we respect and protect the characteristics that make Mawson and other centres across Canberra successful. They are elements that differentiate this and other centres, and they provide a level of amenity and convenience for the community. Retention of surface parking for the convenience of shoppers is strongly supported and one that provides the Mawson Centre with an important point of difference for customers and one that is endorsed by the local community.
- There are unfortunate examples across Canberra of how a previous public car parks have been allowed to be developed without **proper attention to the wider urban design and social amenity interests of the whole centre.**

I trust the above assists in clarification of my statements made at the Hearing on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Arthur Petsas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arthur Petsas  
Director  
Argos Pty Limited