



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

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Submission No 22 -

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Inquiry into Giralang Shops

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We are delighted to see some interest on behalf of government into the circumstances that have now persisted for some time in relation to the Giralang shops. We hope that this inquiry might finally see some progress toward better amenity for Giralang residents.

Giralang is a large suburb with a growing and diverse demographic. That demographic includes many young families as well as longer term, elderly residents. Many who, as seems to be the case in our street, live alone.

It is extremely frustrating to continue to observe the neglected eyesore that is the site where the Giralang shops should be. Giralang is a beautiful suburb with access to expansive green space and the unfinished, poorly maintained building site detracts from the otherwise well maintained nature of the suburb.

There are other crucial factors than just the appearance of the derelict site. Not only do local shops improve convenience for local residents but they provide an important and reliable forum for community engagement and a hub for folks to be able to access groceries easily and more cheaply without the need for travel outside the suburb. As a matter of common sense and experience local shops contribute strongly to a sense of community and belonging for local residents. Aside from the small 7 Eleven, there is no place in Giralang for locals to casually and gradually get to know one another, advertise their services or businesses, sell raffle tickets for the primary school for instance or importantly, seek local employment. An experience at any local shops demonstrates the way they support community engagement and responsibility.

In particular we note that young parents and elderly residents do not have local shops within walking distance to be able to buy their daily needs or simply get out and about and say hello to someone without the need for a car or a bus – in particular for this cohort of residents the capacity to socialise and engage is incredibly important for their wellbeing. The absence of local shops means Giralang residents must access other (often larger corporate) supermarkets which restricts our capacity to support local business initiatives or indeed to create it ourselves (for example, the Cook shops stocks honey made in the backyards of local residents!).

The continued neglect of the site by the developer immediately adjacent to the primary school is a safety concern. The site would undoubtedly be very tempting for curious, adventurous children, as well as those engaging in various forms of anti-social behaviour. There is no security at the site and with enough determination it could no doubt be accessed. There are many opportunities for serious injury if children were to access the site unsupervised noting there is the beginning of a first floor with a significant drop to ground level that once in the site, could quite easily occur as there are no barriers to prevent a jump or fall from that first floor level.

The unfinished site gives the suburb an air of neglect and hopelessness (because it has been sitting dormant for so very long) that is inconsistent with the generally well kept manner in which many Giralang residents keep their homes. We live within walking distance of the shops site, something we would like to be able to allow our children to do is walk to their local shops as they begin to explore their independence.

The derelict site undermines progress in the suburb. It undoubtedly impacts the attractiveness of the suburb for potential buyers (as opposed to, for instance Kaleen which enjoys a number of options for local residents). It could be a site utilised to create more affordable housing options in the suburb but instead sits languishing.

The site is dirty, unkempt and unsightly. An eyesore for all residents and undoubtedly unpleasant for the primary school users and residents who live immediately opposite the site.

We support any well considered and appropriate measures that would see this situation resolve. It is the only drawback of an otherwise terrific Canberra suburb. We struggle to understand the approach of the developer. If there is no motivation to develop the site (the only interpretation of the inaction there for some significant period of time) why not sell the land to government or privately to someone who will properly take advantage of the amazing position and the large surrounding population who would welcome enhanced amenity? We also struggle to understand how it is that government has allowed this to persist for so very long? Perhaps it might go some way to explaining the recent voting pattern in Yerrabi at the last election. Whenever we do have the opportunity to speak with our neighbours and other residents it is consistently a topic of concern and frustration and every candidate we spoke to in the lead up to the election we were keenly interested in their views on resolving the Giralang shops.

We implore the government to consider the most appropriate measures available to ensure some progress is achieved as soon as possible.

Joe Hedger & Louise Taylor



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