



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES  
Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy), Mark Parton MLA

Submission No 31 -

Ms Lesley Irvine

Inquiry into Giralang

Shops

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES**

Submission on

**Inquiry into Giralang shops**

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## **Terms of Reference**

### **Inquiry into Giralang shops**

On 3 March 2021 the Planning, Transport, and City Services Committee agreed to inquire into [Petition No 4-21](#) concerning Giralang Shops, lodged in the Assembly 10 February 2021 and seek on behalf of the Giralang Community an update from the developer on the progression of the Giralang Shops Development.

### **Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services**

My submission to the Inquiry into Giralang shops is written from the viewpoint of a long-term resident of Giralang seeking to communicate the story of the Giralang Shops as I have perceived it over the last 15 years, a story of deprivation, lack of equity and despair which will underpin my concerns for the developer to consider.

I have lived in Giralang since 1980 and for many years I and my family enjoyed the amenity of the local Giralang shops, originally consisting of an IGA supermarket, a bakery, restaurant, pizza shop, chemist, newsagent, hairdresser, and doctor.

It was a great disappointment to lose the convenience and community space of the Giralang shops back in 2005. Our nearest shops in Kaleen are not within easy walking distance, and opposition from Kaleen and Evatt supermarkets to development applications for the Giralang shops has not fostered a sense of connection to their community spaces.

Three development applications were put forward but did not progress following challenges by Kaleen and Evatt supermarkets. In 2011, when then Planning Minister, Simon Corbell used his “call-in” powers to allow the development to progress, we thought our shops were finally assured.

However, Kaleen and Evatt supermarkets appealed the decision by Minister Corbell. In 2012 the Supreme Court ruled against the appeal, and in favour of the Giralang shops development application. This application included a 1500 sq metres supermarket. Nevertheless, building did not commence despite the Supreme Court’s decision.

In 2013 The ACT Government decreased the allowable size of a suburban supermarket to 1000 sq metres, which I understand was a concession to the Kaleen and Evatt supermarkets, who agreed they would not oppose a development application with a 1000 sq metres supermarket. However, this resulted in Woolworths withdrawing their expression of interest as the supermarket tenant.

In 2014, after ten years of neglect, the derelict shops were demolished. Some time later excavation and construction work began on the site, but then was halted and left in an unfinished state.

In 2016, Supabarn, one of the litigants against the Giralang shops development, sold their supermarket in Kaleen to Coles. This was approved by The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. I do not know the actual floor size of Coles at Kaleen but it covers a substantial area, and Coles also increased its retail space by acquiring the adjacent fruit and vegetable shop. There is

an obvious inequity here, with Giralang being denied a Woolworths supermarket and an expanded Coles being allowed for Kaleen.

In early 2018 the developer consulted with the Giralang community over a new development application which featured 50 high rise apartments, a 1000 sq metres supermarket, and space for other commercial leases. The plans were attractive, and although apartments were originally not favoured by residents, we were told that they were essential for the viability of the supermarket and other tenant businesses. Our expectations were high as the display suite for the Audri Apartments opened in late 2018, with understanding from the developer that building was to start in February 2019. Hope again faded when it became obvious that the display suite was no longer used, advertising of the apartments was no longer apparent, site offices were later removed, and the building site was neglected.

In May 2019 some information was made available on the status of the proposed development when Suzanne Orr MLA provided an update from the developer via the Belconnen Community Council Facebook page. The developer's update was positive and hopeful, but nothing progressed.

Almost a year later in April 2020, in the Canberra Times and the Riot Act, the developer identified the lack of an anchor supermarket tenant as the cause of delay. Without a commitment from a supermarket the developer now considered the development to be unviable and expressed an intention to explore other options for the site.

My concerns for the developer to consider are:

1. The ongoing loss of the Giralang shops is a constant angst, to see the unattractive construction site every day, to feel encouraged that we will have our shops with each new development application, then to gradually lose hope, with updates few and far between. Please bring resolution soon to this protracted dilemma for Giralang residents, with a preferred outcome of shops and a community space for Giralang.
2. Why is a commitment from an anchor supermarket tenant essential before the development can progress? I appreciate this a commercial proposition but is there another way of progressing the project without a prior commitment from a supermarket tenant?
3. How widely was the search for a supermarket tenant advertised? Did it include Aldi who were once planning a supermarket at Kaleen, and may be interested in Giralang instead?
4. The intention expressed by the developer to explore other options for the Giralang shops site implies that shops, or at least a supermarket, would be excluded. Is it the case that there would not be shops in other options for the site that the developer intends to explore?

If so, this would be a serious cost to the Giralang community, albeit one we have endured for fifteen years, although during that time we have been sustained by the hope that eventually the shops would come.

I consider local shops to be critical for a healthy community. The amenity of a nearby congenial and safe community space is important for everyone, and for the ageing and others with restricted mobility it is essential that easily accessible shops are close at hand.