



# 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 61 -

Mr Chad Swanson

Inquiry into Giralang

Shops

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Name of the inquiry: Inquiry into Giralang Shops

Author's name: Chad Swanson

A postal address and contact telephone number; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Being a Giralang resident, it is frustrating not having shops, but I am hoping that some lessons will be learnt that will reduce the likelihood of the same thing happening again in other developments throughout Canberra.

The main lesson is that developers should be kept at arm's length from government to ensure their developments go through the scrutiny of a public consultation process. The initial delay can be attributed to Planning Minister Simon Corbell using his call in powers in 2011 to approve the shops without such a public consultation. Corbell obviously backed his judgement over the judgement of those in the community, and such egocentrism is perhaps understandable from a politician. Nevertheless, politicians are sometimes blinkered and their conclusions don't always consider the wishes and expertise of all stakeholders. While the subsequent court cases stopped the development, which I was negatively impacted by, I am happy that some of the affected parties had their say and were able to use the courts to ensure the law was followed.

The second lesson is that, when it comes to urban renewal, we have to be careful about developers trying to elevate profit above suburban character. While the initial delay was court ordered, the second was caused by the developer wanting to make a targeted profit out of the suburb when that profit just wasn't there to be made. This was reflected in the Audri design that prioritised maximising the number of allowable units rather than matching the suburb character. Specifically, Giralang is a green field suburb and attracts people who like its space and environmental synergy. The Audri development was one more suited to a town centre. Living in an apartment in Giralang would be a bit like living on the beach but being unable to swim. There is something quite depressing about the mere idea of it. For that reason, it was not a surprise that it did not sell in sufficient numbers for the project to proceed.

Pushing for a 1500 square meter supermarket has also contributed to an unnecessary delay. Major tenants like Woolworths have understandably refused to sign a rental agreement because they recognise a supermarket of that size is not needed for a suburb where there is already a super market at Kaleen.

A development that is more similar to that at the Aranda shops would be far more consistent with the character of the Giralang. It would also be a development that was more realistic about the economic potential of the local market. Instead of being a \$20 million development it might be a \$5 million. That would obviously be below the pay scale of a large developer like Nikias

Diamond, but this is where the approvals process needs to be able to intervene and hold the developers to the characteristics of the site and localised economy.

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