

**Submission re Draft Variation 308
Cooyong St. Urban Renewal Project.**

1. Is rezoning necessary to meet the redevelopment's objectives?

1.1 The aim is to redevelop a complex of well-built but out-of-date public housing accommodation into accommodation of mixed public and private housing.

1.2 At present the complex has one owner, the ACT Government. On completion, there will be 188 strata titles on the Bega Courts site alone, not counting any proposed commercial leases. Resuming properties for future development (ie proposed high-speed rail construction and facilities) will be very expensive.

1.3 The expanded two above-ground storey Canberra Centre has extensive retail facilities, eating places and commercial shopfront outlets. These are never fully occupied with many windows boarded until a new tenant is found. This is often at the expense of the adjacent City retail areas which in turn are slowly degrading.

1.4 Colin Stewart, an advocate of urban infill, when speaking on ABC Radio 666, recommended that a city the size of Canberra (allowing for future population increase) should limit high-rise buildings to the CBD and infill unused areas with medium density housing, 3 to 4 storeys with landscaping. He described constructions similar to the Argyle Square complex, on the northern side of Kogarah Lane (which this planned DV308 redevelopment will overwhelm).

1.5 We do not need to expand the designated CBD by rezoning residential areas. There is more than enough space, much unoccupied, available for a city the size of Canberra. The City boundary stops on the south side of Cooyong Street and should remain there. Canberra is a planned city and the CBD was *planned* to accommodate a future expanded population. If this infringement goes ahead it sets a precedent. What next?

2. Implications for Parking and Traffic in the Area

2.1 There is insufficient parking in residential Reid and Braddon at the present time. All side streets close to the City have limited parking times. Insensitive drivers make residents' lives difficult by parking in private property, often blocking garages. There is insufficient allowance for extra parking in the DV308 Plan. Most residents in the proposed complex will be employed and will own a car, and even if they walk to work, they will want somewhere secure to keep it. Most units will have more than one resident, each probably owning a car. If the architects of DV308 own cars themselves, they must assume that the residents will too.

2.2 Kogarah Lane, the proposed entrance for all 188 Units, is *inadequate for the purpose*. It was designed as a service lane. Vehicle entrance for the present Bega Courts is off Boulee Street, yet still traffic in Kogarah Lane is brought to a standstill by a slow large vehicle (such as the garbage or a delivery truck) occupying the laneway.

2.3 If the existing road system is only just managing to cope with its present use, it will be chaotic if it is expected to cope with the proposed DV308 Plan. It would be short-sighted and irresponsible not to deal with this inevitable problem in advance. We consider there is a potential for liability for future OH&S issues.

3. Height, scale and associated impacts of the DV308 plan

3.1 The original plan for this redevelopment on display in the Canberra Centre showed the maximum heights on Cooyong Street as similar to the existing Currong Courts (8 storeys). As approval for this height had been already been granted for this site when Currong Courts were built, it was not unexpected. However, the 15 storey “bookends” replacing the present 3 storey buildings in a residential area is cocooned planning.

3.2 The buildings are aesthetically disproportionate to the low-rise buildings of Reid, Braddon and the 2 storey Canberra Centre.

3.3 DV308 will shadow Argyle Square, a complex of 2, 3 and 4 storeys that was nationally praised as an example of sensitive medium density development. This is the sort of residential infill that was recommended by Colin Stewart on ABC Radio 666 (op cit).

3.4 Apart from the shadow, DV308 also infringes the privacy of many of the Argyle Square residents in almost every way. Curtains will have to be kept permanently drawn on some windows. This intrusion into privacy is not allowed when suburban houses are being extended. Developers have to provide guarantees that privacy will not be overly infringed. Why does this not apply for the DV308 plan?

3.5 The recent much lauded renaming of the view from Mount Ainslie (an axis view) as the Marion Mahony Griffin View was a centennial tribute to the brilliance and far-sightedness of Marion Mahony Griffin (and her husband Walter Burley Griffin). To have the view so summarily changed is an international insult to her memory.

3.6 We hesitate to use the word “greed”, but we think it applies to this development. Too much is crammed into the allotted space. A city as beautiful as Canberra should not be destroyed for blinkered short-term gain. Unfortunately, accountability can be thrown to the winds. Too often individuals have moved, retired or even died when fingers start to point. However, it is an unpleasant stigma attached to the name. Some do not realise the damage they are causing. More alarmingly, many do, but don’t care.

4 and 5 The impact on amenity and character of the surrounding area and Heritage considerations.

4.1 The impact on amenity and character has been discussed in the 3 preceding areas of interest involving height, traffic, aesthetics, ethos, etc. The consideration of height was a factor when determining the nature of proposed buildings in Braddon and along Constitution Avenue with a limit of 6 storeys stipulated in these semi- and non-residential areas. Why should the same factors not be applied to DV308?

4.2 The unique heritage value of Reid should be acknowledged and respected. Argyle Square, although not heritage listed, also because of its uniqueness, is in that category. It has been recognised and visited by architects from major Australian cities. I hope there is not some private personal antagonism towards the complex because of its location among public housing. As the aim is to sell the new apartments to private owners, then if anything, their location in a mixed social environment should enhance their status and is a reason to ensure the area is not visually degraded. DV308 should use its proximity to Argyle Square to enhance its own aesthetic value as well as complement the buildings around it.

4.3 Glebe Park has not been mentioned yet. It is a delightful and well-used asset, created in the days when formal parkland was appreciated. Its trees, its layout and its charm should not be compromised by being overshadowed (morning sun) by 10 storey buildings.

4.4 Also not mentioned in this submission, although referred to in our initial response, is the problem of pollution. This does not seem to have been addressed. The huge wall of buildings on Kogarah Lane will trap fumes from idling vehicles waiting to enter the underground carpark. A relation of ours (residing in Japan) died from a blood cancer caused by constant car fumes entering the building he lived in. There is no reason for a city with such clean air as Canberra has to create an avoidable pollution problem. There are too many units in the proposed Precincts IV and V of the plan (ie Bega Courts) which will inevitably mean too many car exhausts (see section 2).

4.5 Referring again to the *proposed fast rail link*---Is DV308 the right sort of accommodation to be building in light of this very recent announcement? Can it be easily resumed from the individual strata title owners and demolished when the same space is needed for the rail facilities? *It is a new situation which needs new consideration.*

6. City/residential boundaries.


6.1 Discussed in section (1), but to repeat; Canberra was planned by far-sighted people to grow into a mature city. The designated CBD has more than enough room for present and future needs. The City boundary ends at the south side of Cooyong Street and it should stay there. A good city has high-rise in its CBD, medium density housing on the CBD fringes and low density housing in its suburbs. Canberra was planned to accommodate these features and we should make use of the land still available without altering boundaries for expediency. Walter Burley Griffin designed a beautiful city with uninterrupted views along the planned axes. To date these have been retained. Ainslie Avenue is an axis. Let us assume Walter Burley Griffin knew what he was doing. The original plan for the area had a maximum of 8 storeys, still too high but less intrusive and overshadowing if only fronting the Cooyong St. boundary between Reid and the CBD. Why do we have to depart from this original plan?


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For the attention of:

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