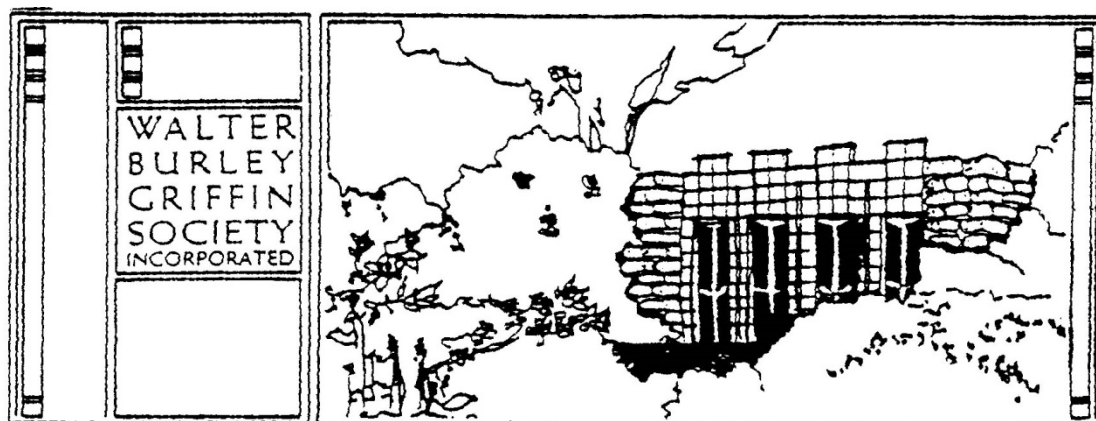




c/- The Secretary
140 Edinburgh Road
Castlecrag, NSW 2068
22 April 2014

Ms Margie Morrison, Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning, Environment & Territory and Municipal Services
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Ms Morrison,

Inquiry into the Planning & Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014

The Walter Burley Griffin Society thanks the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment & Territory and Municipal Service for the opportunity to comment on the *Planning & Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014*, which was presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly by Minister Corbell on 20 March 2014, and referred to the Committee on 8 April 2014.

The Bill under consideration proposes a 'fast-track' planning process for the Australian Capital Territory which if implemented in its current form, would have grave consequences for the character, quality, amenity and sustainability of the National Capital. At the same time, aspects of the proposal – based on the Society's interpretation of Minister Corbell's first reading speech on 20 March 2014 – have some positive attributes. These include:

- an orderly process for Special Precinct designation, and declaration of a Project of Major Significance involving public consultation and approval by the ACT Legislative Assembly *in lieu* of the Minister's call-in process under the *Planning & Development Act*, or project-by-project legislation such as the *Gungahlin Drive Authorisation Act 2004*;

- removal of the proposed Ministerial call-in powers contained in the *Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill 2013*.

Negative aspects of the proposal include:

- removal of the right of appeal to the ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal;
- removal of application of the *Heritage Act* and the *Tree Protection Act* in the granting of development approvals in Special Precincts;
- 'fast tracking' Environmental Impact Statement preparation and Development Assessment in Special Precincts prior to approval of Territory Plan Draft Variations.

In the Society's view the negative aspects of the *Planning & Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014* should be rejected as totally unacceptable enabling measures, and the positive aspects supported. We recommend that the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Service adopt this course of action, and propose amendments to the Bill accordingly.

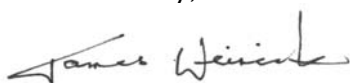
The Society is concerned by the cumbersome nature of planning in the ACT with the Territory Plan subject to a baffling number of variations up to and including Plan Variation No.324, and a track-based system of development approval that has led to many unintended consequences.

Orderly, transparent designation of Special Precincts and Projects of Major Significance may improve this situation if based on sound principles of urban development and design, facilitating much-needed enhancement of the National Capital through projects such as a Light Rail system (proposed by Walter Burley Griffin a century ago). However, the entry boulevards, main avenues, focal points (such as City Hill and Civic), and lakeshore – all subject to major proposals at this time – are fundamental elements of the Griffin Plan, which have national and international significance. In proposing the removal of essential checks and balances the *Planning & Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014* in its present form places these elements of Canberra at unacceptable risk from private interests, bad decision making and incremental, ad hoc, low standard developments.

We urge amendment of the Bill.

This submission has been prepared on behalf of the Sydney-based Management Committee of the Walter Burley Griffin Society, in consultation with members of the Canberra Chapter of the Society. My colleague, Mr Brett Odgers of the Canberra Chapter, wishes to appear before the Committee at the public hearing on Thursday, 24 April 2014.

Yours sincerely,



Professor James Weirick
President, Walter Burley Griffin Society

The Walter Burley Griffin Society, Inc.

Established in 1988 in Sydney, the Society - now in its twenty-sixth year - commemorates the lives and works of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin and promotes the ideals, vision and community life they fostered in Australia. The Society is especially concerned with the conservation of landscape designs, urban plans, buildings and other works designed by or having an association with the Griffins. In relation to urban development in contemporary Canberra, the Society seeks to promote an understanding of the principles that underpin the Griffin Plan for the National Capital, the continuing value of these principles to the nation, and the need to conserve the places, institutions and processes founded on these principles.

The Society has several hundred members from various parts of Australia and USA. The Canberra Chapter of the Society was established in 2004. The Society is affiliated with the Walter Burley Griffin Society of America (established in 1998).

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