



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy), Mark Parton MLA

Submission No 32 -

Mr Owen Ferris

Inquiry into Giralang

Shops

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6 April 2021

Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Re: Submission to Giralang Shops Inquiry

Dear Sir/ Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the abovementioned Inquiry.

I have lived in Giralang since 1978 and consider it an excellent suburb in which to reside. I applaud the early planning laws as applied to the development of Canberra. These laws focussed on the provision of a central suburban hub consisting of shopping, educational and social facilities. As we know - Canberra suburbs tend to proceed through very similar phases. At first, they attract young families with schools full to the brim and with a busy social hum. As time goes on, the residents age (as do the facilities), school enrolments fall and the needs of the local community change. Then, they go through a rebirth stage, with families, developers and builders moving back in, with more affluent buyers seeking out suburbs due to their proximity and capability of refurbishment and redevelopment.

Giralang has reached this stage. The suburb is now ready for a refreshed central hub. It already has an excellent preschool and primary school, but sadly lacks complementary shopping, commercial and social facilities.

In the early years, prior to 1978 and up to 2004 a single storey shopping centre competently served the needs of the Giralang community. Around that time rent raises forced the closure of a number of shops.

For a number of years the empty buildings sat idle until they were demolished. In the ensuing years a protracted legal battle and other factors prevented the redevelopment of the precinct. That case was settled some years ago and since that time incompetence and inaction have been the order of the day.

Now we have a situation where planning approvals have apparently cleared the way for a multi storey development incorporating a shopping centre and residential units. However, we have an impasse where the developer is eyeing an opportunity to bring pressure on the ACT Government to relax its 1,000m² rule for major supermarkets, so that an anchor tenant such as Woolworths can be brought on board.

I am not alone in the belief that the Giralang Shops redevelopment does not need another major supermarket chain. I look to suburbs such as Ainslie, which has gone through its rebirth and which has a vibrant, multi-faceted shopping centre. Giralang is ready for a similar complex.

I would be embarrassed to be a member of the Legislative Assembly whenever the Giralang Shops disaster was mentioned.

It is past time the ACT Government took this matter in hand. A number of options present themselves - a take-back or buyback of the lease is one. There is substantial money to be made in this redevelopment. The only deterrent is the level of greed involved. There exists a very real opportunity to build a precinct which includes educational, cultural, social, medical, administrative and shopping services.

In anyone's language - 18 years without a shopping precinct is extraordinary and smacks of inaction, inattention, incompetence and dereliction of duty on the part of our elected officials. Maybe it's time to bite the bullet and decide who is really running this town.

Yours sincerely

Owen J. Ferris

[Redacted signature]



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