



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN SERVICES

REPORT NO.68

MARCH 2001

**THE 2001-02 DRAFT BUDGET INITIATIVES AND THE
2001-02 DRAFT CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM FOR
THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN SERVICES**

Because of the tight deadline for this inquiry, the committee has produced a short report in five sections. The first section outlines the committee's recommendation; the second section summarises submissions; the third section makes some observations upon the key documents and the process generally; the fourth section summarises key dates in the inquiry; and the final section records the committee's appreciation of those who contributed to the inquiry.

I. Recommendation

1. That the government note the submissions received by this committee in the course of the inquiry and take them into account in framing the 2001-02 Budget. The committee particularly draws attention to the following matters:

- (a) the desirability of bringing forward the duplication of William Hovell Drive which, at the moment, is planned to commence in September 2003; however, the existing traffic congestion and problems for Belconnen motorists indicate that the work should start in 2002;*
- (b) the desirability of allocating at least \$200,000 to ACT WorkCover. This reflects the fact that ACT WorkCover is experiencing greater legal costs arising out of its prosecutorial activity. Also, ACT WorkCover has to bear higher administrative costs since it became a separate financial entity in June 2000;*
- (c) the desirability of commencing planning for an expanded library at Kippax. This reflects the old and limited nature of the present building and the need to provide a permanent facility for West Belconnen residents;*

Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Services

The committee was established on 28/4/98 to inquire into and report on planning and lease management, road and transport services, infrastructure and asset management and public utilities purchasing, electricity industry and regulation, construction industry policy, parks and forests, private sector employment inspectorate, building services, environment, heritage and municipal services and any other related matter (resolution of appointment, as amended on 25/11/99, 7/12/00 and 15/2/01)

Committee members

Mr Harold Hird MLA (Chair)

Mr Dave Rugendyke MLA (Deputy Chair)

Mr Simon Corbell MLA

Secretary: Mr Rod Power

Secretary to the Committee Office: Ms Judy Moutia

For further information, contact the secretary on ph: 02 6205-0435 or fax: 02 6205-0432 or e-mail:
committees@act.gov.au

- (d) *the desirability of allocating sufficient funds to promptly construct a bus layby on Athllon Drive at Garran to service school buses serving Sts Peter and Paul School. This would alleviate the danger to schoolchildren and motorists posed by school buses stopping on Athllon Drive (an 80kph zone), thus blocking one lane of traffic and giving rise to the possibility of a bad accident involving the schoolchildren;*
- (e) *the desirability of improving facilities for young people in the West Belconnen area by facilitating the use of the former Charnwood High School site as a community recreational area and skate park, along the lines suggested by the Canberra Christian Life Centre;*
- (f) *the desirability of a cross-agency approach in planning for the provision of community facilities. This recognises the important role played by the many ACT community groups and the need to ensure that they are housed in appropriate accommodation; and*
- (g) *the desirability of providing more time for the parliament's standing committees to consult on the draft Budget initiatives and the draft capital works program. The committee values the input of community groups and members of the public. The committee also recognises the support of peak bodies such as ACTCOSS and the Conservation Council for the principle of parliamentary scrutiny of the draft Budget initiatives and draft capital works program. Members of the committee look forward to receiving suggestions from these bodies on how the process might be improved.¹*

II. Submissions

1. Submitters to the inquiry made the following points.
2. The ACT government stated that:

In the absence of your committee bringing forward any specific initiatives [to spend the unanticipated increase in Grant Commission payments to the ACT], the government will consider allocating the funding to the government's three themes: Poverty, Innovation and Early Intervention.²

3. ACTCOSS made five suggestions: for funding to be made available to conduct a comprehensive review of 'the total cost to government and society...of private transport and the full range of savings that flow to the public and the community from adequate provision of public transport'; for greater funding of ACTION to improve feeder service timetables; for funds to be set aside 'to improve the standard of community facilities'; for capital works funding of 'further

¹ Ms Davies [Conservation Council], Transcript 19/3/01.

² Correspondence from the Treasurer dated 1/3/01.

community organisation space in the Civic precinct'; and for funding of 'a comprehensive community facilities strategy for the ACT'.³

4. Canberra Christian Life Centre called for funding of 'a community recreational areas and skate park' on part of its land at the old Charnwood High School.⁴
5. Conservation Council of the South East Region & Canberra suggests that the surplus Budget funds 'be invested in community services' rather than be used to lower taxes; that 'increased funding [be made available] for the implementation of the ACT Greenhouse Strategy'; that the funds be used to review the costs of public and private transport; that ACTION's community service obligations be reviewed; that funding for ACTION be increased to improve feeder services; that a review be undertaken of funding for environmental programs; that funds be made available to protect 'all high and very high conservation value woodlands and grasslands'; that funds be used 'to properly manage the Significant Tree Register'; that funds be devoted to implement the Vertebrate Pests Strategy; that funds be allocated to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service 'to maintain the integrity of the ACT's reserve system'; that 'sufficient' funds be allocated 'to ensure the Act meets its target of No Waste by 2008'; and that funds be provided to identify and develop 'an alternative storage site of hazardous waste in the ACT'.⁵
6. Mr Fraser called for funding to implement stage 2 of the Lyneham, Turner and O'Connor traffic management scheme.⁶
7. Mr Haywood called for 'a skate park in the Charnwood area'.⁷
8. Ms Howitt called for the Budget surplus to be spent on destroying 'invasive weeds such as St. John's Wort... [and] Salsify [weed]'.⁸
9. Kippax Task Force called for funding of 'a multi-purpose community facility [at Kippax] that will also house a new public library' of an increased size.⁹
10. Mr McDonough suggested the Budget surplus be used to reduce the cost of domestic heating in winter; to reduce the cost of excess water and/or to supplement funding 'for maintaining streetscapes'.¹⁰
11. Ms Munoz called for Kippax Library to close at 5.30pm rather than 5.00pm, and to open on at least one evening each week.¹¹
12. Mr Nicoll calls for funds to be spent on 'a skate park and other community recreation facilities in the West Belconnen area', especially at Charnwood.¹²

³ Submission dated March 2001.

⁴ Facsimile dated 13/3/01.

⁵ Submission dated March 2001.

⁶ E-mail dated 9/3/01.

⁷ E-mail dated 13/3/01.

⁸ Facsimile dated 13/3/01.

⁹ Facsimile dated 13/3/01 [Chris Watson, convenor].

¹⁰ Facsimile dated 15/2/01.

¹¹ E-mail dated 7/3/01.

13. Ms Rainbird [ParkCare coordinator for Friends of Farrer Ridge] called for funding 'to support the work done voluntarily by many people in the community for Parkcare'.¹³
14. Mr Reid called for 'a skate park in Charnwood'.¹⁴
15. Ms Sledge called for the surplus funds spent 'on removing threatening weeds' and employing 'extra personnel... to give effect to legislation which has been passed to guard the environment'.¹⁵
16. M Spence calls for the funding of non-chemical weed control programs (using the steam method).¹⁶
17. Sts Peter and Paul School Board calls for 'a bus lay-by' in Yamba Drive to enable the safe loading of schoolchildren onto buses.¹⁷

III. Observations

18. The committee noted the significant increase in ACTION's costs brought about changes to the Australian exchange rate, which affects the acquisition of parts for the Renault bus fleet and the purchase of tickets (which are sourced from New Zealand and the UK).¹⁸
19. The committee welcomes the proposal to add three more bus routes to the two already established that are capable of handling disabled passengers.¹⁹
20. The committee welcomes the proposed road works in the Gungahlin area which are part of the government's five-year package of measures to address traffic congestion and to improve road safety.²⁰ In particular, the committee welcomes the proposed expenditure on Horse Park Drive to link it to Majura Road. The first stage of this project would be to construct a road of rural standard.²¹ The

¹² Submission (undated).

¹³ E-mail dated 13/3/01.

¹⁴ E-mail dated 13/3/01.

¹⁵ Facsimile dated 13/3/01.

¹⁶ Submission dated 19/3/01.

¹⁷ Submission dated 5/3/01.

¹⁸ Transcript 19/3/01.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See the 2001-02 draft capital works program under the heading 'Road Safety and Congestion Program'.

²¹ Transcript 19/3/01. Funding for this project was provided in the 2000-01 Budget. Its overall cost is \$7m of which \$1m will be spent in 2001-02 and \$6m in 2001-03 [*Budget Paper No.3* of the 2000-01 Budget, Table 5.4.1 p.126].

committee notes that the proposed roadworks are in line with recommendations in the committee's recent report on the Gungahlin Drive extension.²²

21. The committee welcomes the proposed expenditure on street lighting as part of measures to control crime.²³
22. The committee noted the proposed funding for street and park tree replacement (involving 1,300 new trees to be planted in 2001-02).²⁴ Previous reports by this committee have drawn attention to the need for greater attention to devoting funds on an annual basis to ensure that Canberra's tree asset is replaced as the trees age. The committee welcomes this program.
23. The committee notes the proposed expenditure of \$180,000 on implementing the ACT greenhouse strategy; however, the committee points out that \$125,000 of this is to be spent on an energy efficient lighting refit at Macarthur House. The proposed expenditure on Macarthur House appears to be disproportionate in relation to the total funds available for the greenhouse program and could give the ACT community a misleading impression of the financing actually available to address greenhouse problems.
24. The committee notes the proposed expenditure on the development of a neighbourhood oval at Amaroo. The committee is aware that the expanding Gungahlin community has a need for more playing fields. The committee considers that the government should consider reviewing its criteria for the provision of playing fields to ensure that Gungahlin families have sufficient ovals for the current, and projected, demand.

IV. Key dates in the inquiry

15/2/01—The Legislative Assembly referred the 2001-02 draft Budget initiatives and the 2001-02 draft Capital Works Program for each appropriation unit to the relevant standing committee, for inquiry and report by 23/3/01

16/2/01—The Treasurer [Mr Gary Humphries MLA] referred the Phase II Consultation package to the committee. The package is in two parts. The first part is headed *Draft Budget Initiatives* and summarises their financial impact as well as providing a brief description of each initiative. The second part of the package is headed *Summary of Capital Works Program*. It lists the capital works program for DUS.

24/2/01 and 27/2/01—The committee placed advertisements in the local media inviting public comment, to be received by COB Tuesday 13/3/01.

²² *Proposals for the Gungahlin Drive Extension (John Dedman Parkway)* Report NO.67 of the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Services, February 2001.

²³ Transcript 19/3/01.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

2/3/01—The Treasurer (Mr Humphries MLA) invited the committee ‘to propose additional initiatives’ for the government’s Budget, in light of an unanticipated increase in Grant Commission payments to the ACT. For DUS, the amount is about \$698,000.

19/3/01—The committee held a public hearing and examined:

- the Minister for Urban Services (Mr Smyth MLA) and DUS officials
- Mr Evans and Ms Vreugdenhil [ACTCOSS]
- Ms Davies [Conservation Council]
- Mr Wright and Dr Watson [Kippax Task Force]
- Pastors McMillan and Stanton, along with Mr Reid [Canberra Christian Life Centre]
- Ms Mallone [Sts Peter and Paul School Board].

V. Appreciation

The committee extends its appreciation to all those who contributed to the inquiry.

Harold Hird MLA
Chair

23 March 2001