



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Planning for the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency Centre (SPIRE) and the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds.

Submission Number: 17 - Ware

Date Authorised for Publication: 26 February 2020

Submission to the
Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal
Inquiry into Planning for the Surgical Procedures,
Interventional Radiology and Emergency Centre (SPIRE) and
the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds

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Submission to the Inquiry into Planning for the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency Centre (SPIRE) and the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds

Summary

The new emergency department for the Canberra Hospital must not be located in the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency (SPIRE) Centre if this Centre is built at the corner of Gilmore Crescent and Palmer Street, Garran. This is because locating the emergency department on this site will result in unacceptable risks to public safety – pedestrians, cyclists and drivers and passengers of vehicles. The risk arises from worried distracted drivers taking people to the emergency department. In particular the risk to children attending the primary school located adjacent to the site is irresponsible.

Aircraft noise from the ambulance/rescue helicopter will adversely impact the learning of the children attending Garran Primary School.

The ACT Government has said that the site decision was made after extensive consultation with clinicians (*The Canberra Times* 25 October 2019). However, there was no consultation with the Garran community and in particular Garran Primary School, who are responsible for the safety and learning outcomes of more than 500 children.

Planning for the location of a new emergency department must be re-done. The revised planning must consider how the proposed emergency department is entered and how that impacts on the immediate surrounds outside the Canberra Hospital. All efforts to eliminate and minimise negative impacts, on vulnerable school children must be made.

Safety

I am very familiar with the proposed site. It is simply an extremely poor location for hospital emergency.

I have lived in Hughes and Curtin for 40 years. I drive along Palmers St, Gilmore Crescent, Kitchener St, Yamba Drive and Hindmarsh Drive regularly. I have visited people who are in Canberra Hospital. I donate blood at the Red Cross centre, which is close to the site. I have driven people to the emergency department. I have been driven to the emergency department. On one occasion my doctor advised my partner to drive me rather than loose time waiting for an ambulance. In these kind of circumstances drivers are stressed and distracted and are likely to ignore the 40kph speed limit in the school zone.

Children under 12 years old (the vast majority of primary school children) are not yet able to assess speed and distance accurately. The children attending Garran Primary will be at risk from worried distracted drivers entering emergency. This risk is not from ambulances: their drivers are well trained and highly skilled. The risk is from other vehicles rushing to take someone to emergency.

The proposal to locate the hospital emergency on a residential street and adjacent to a primary school can only have been taken if this context has been ignored.

Children's learning

Studies of the impact of aircraft noise on children's learning consistently find that repeated exposure to aircraft noise is associated with poorer reading performance in school children, with teacher's reports indicating that severe disruptions of classroom instruction due to aircraft noise may contribute to this effect. There is also good evidence for aircraft noise adversely effecting test scores and long-term and short-term memory. (Chapter 3 –

Environmental noise and cognitive impairment in children – in the 2011 report from the World Health Organisation *Burden of disease from environmental noise* provides an overview of some of these studies.)

The adverse impact of aircraft noise on school children's learning is a critical issue for this inquiry as Garran Primary School is so close to the site proposed for the landing pad for the ambulance/rescue helicopter.

Given the adverse impact of aircraft noise on the learning of school children, one key objective for locating the helicopter landing pad associated with a hospital emergency department must be to maximize the distance between the landing pad and a school. However, the proposal for SPIRE is to move the landing pad closer to Garran Primary School.

Planning for the location of a new emergency department must be re-done with the objective of minimising adverse impacts on learning of children attending Garran Primary School.