



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY
Dr Marisa Paterson MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr Ed Cocks MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into ACT's heritage arrangements

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Inquiry into ACT's Heritage Arrangements Submission

Background

Canberra is a unique and beautiful city thanks in no small part to its visionary design heritage. As noted in the NCA's Griffin Legacy document, the early design weaves City Beautiful and Garden City concepts skilfully together within an Australian bush setting. The result is Canberra's unique leafy green, low-density garden suburbs, complete with peaceful open space and parks, geometrically integrated within a system of higher-density urban centres that encompass residential and commercial functions, that deliver a very desirable city to live in.

This uniqueness is exemplified in the older areas of Canberra, including particularly the Inner North precinct, which this submission pertains to. This area of Canberra, designated in the recent Planning System Review and Reform Project as the Inner North and City District, consists of a series of leafy green, low-density residential garden suburbs arranged around the main City (Civic) high density commercial and residential district and the higher density Northbourne Avenue corridor (which could also be considered a district in its own right). In spite of recent moves to increase the density of the Inner North suburbs, much of Canberra's unique character continues to remain. This is at high risk of being lost though if existing higher density redevelopment and proposed Planning Reforms are left unchecked.

Current Heritage Arrangements

Current heritage protections focus on individual buildings and some small groupings of buildings. Façade is a big factor in these instances. Considerations are typically independent of the broader planning context and contributions to Canberra's overall planning heritage. There seems to be a lack of recognition of Canberra's unique and desirable Garden City, and City Beautiful, character. The heritage lens should be zoomed out to consider the bigger picture of Canberra's unique character and appeal before aggressive planning and densification decisions erase it for good.

Proposed Heritage Arrangements

Like others have expressed to this Inquiry, I believe heritage protection should be given to the precinct-level layout of Canberra. In particular, I believe heritage protection should be given to the remaining Garden City and City Beautiful characteristics of the Inner North at the suburb-level. This would see ongoing redevelopment permitted but restricted to the existing lower density of an area. The protection should apply equally across the whole of the Inner North District, including the 'Future Investigation Areas' identified in the recent Planning System Review and Reform Project.

In effect, the protection would provide reinforcement of low density zoning provisions, with the intention of retaining a majority low density residential interspersed with green parks and carefully considered low-medium density redevelopment such as title splits and small groupings of townhouses. These considered density increases should be very carefully dispersed throughout the Inner North noting all areas are close to higher density town centres and transport infrastructure. This approach would ensure the desirable Garden City and City Beautiful characteristics driving Griffin's original Plan are retained and improved for future generations.

[A Note on Other, Fair Densification Opportunities](#)

I note as a riposte to the insistence that Canberra must densify that providing these precinct-level heritage protections would still leave many other opportunities to increase the density of the City District and surrounds. These opportunities exist without the need to destroy Canberra's unique Inner North suburbs' character to achieve them – for example the large, underutilised spaces in the form of horse paddocks, carparks, and disused Government areas. This is to say nothing of increasing the density in existing high-density areas.