



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment,
Planning, Transport and City Services

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment

Submission number: 006

Submitter: Belconnen Way Hotel

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

Submission Re: Redevelopment Proposal for Hawker Shopping Centre – Woolworths

Dear Committee Members,

I write to you as the representative of the family owners of the Belconnen Way Hotel, located at 77 Belconnen Way, Hawker ACT.

By way of background, my mother, Mrs Yula Russell, purchased the land on which the hotel stands at auction in the Albert Hall in 1970. She designed and built the hotel in keeping with the planning framework set by the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) and opened its doors in 1972. More than 50 years on, Mrs Russell still owns and actively manages the hotel, engaging daily in its operations.

Mrs Russell and her late husband, Dr Bill Russell, have also contributed significantly to Canberra's commercial development, having purchased and developed the Deakin Professional Centre, Southlands Mawson, and the Charnwood Shopping Centre, among others. Since arriving in Canberra in 1961, Mrs Russell has played a meaningful role in business, tourism, and charitable activities in the ACT.

I am writing to raise our concerns regarding the recent redevelopment proposal by Woolworths for the Hawker Shopping Centre, which directly impacts the Belconnen Way Hotel and, more broadly, the integrity of the Hawker precinct.

We would like to make it clear from the outset, we are not opposed to the proposal of improving and revamping the Hawker Shopping Centre by Woolworths or any other developer.

We respectfully submit the following points:

1. Heritage and Community Context

The Hawker Shopping Centre was carefully designed under the NCDC to integrate commercial spaces within a community-oriented framework. This model prioritised pedestrian accessibility, integration of uses, and preservation of local character—principles that have stood the test of time and are reflected in the success of the centre.

We are concerned that the Woolworths proposal may not align with these foundational design principles. A large-scale development, such as that proposed, must be measured against both historic planning intent and the new Territory planning legislation and related acts to ensure the continued liveability and cohesiveness of the area.

2. Direct Impact on Belconnen Way Hotel

The proposed development includes a large loading dock immediately outside our hotel and serviced long-stay apartments. If implemented, this would:

- Block all vehicular and pedestrian access from the hotel to the shopping centre
- Force customers—including vulnerable individuals placed with us by ACT Government agencies—to take a 500m detour via the public street or park
- Sever access to essential services (including groceries, pharmacies, and dining) used daily by our guests.

These impacts are not theoretical. Our hotel provides accommodation for disadvantaged and at-risk members of the community, including women and children escaping domestic violence and individuals transitioning from crisis situations. Our kitchen apartments and secure environment make us uniquely suited to this need.

The redevelopment as currently proposed will endanger this function and jeopardise the viability of our business. I have conservatively estimated a 30% drop in profitability if access is cut off as shown in the Woolworths plans.

3. Call for Independent Review

We urge that, if and when directed or requested by the ACT Government, the National Capital Design Review Panel undertake a comprehensive review of the Woolworths proposal with regard to:

- Original NCDC design principles
- Compliance with the new Territory Plan and related legislation
- Community access and integration
- Impact on existing businesses and services

We believe this review is vital to ensure any redevelopment adds value without compromising existing community assets.

4. Request for Collaboration

We are not opposed to the redevelopment of the Hawker Shopping Centre, nor to Woolworths' involvement. We recognise that renewal is overdue and we welcome thoughtful investment in the precinct.

However, we seek a collaborative approach, where stakeholders like ourselves are consulted, and where access between the hotel and the shopping centre is preserved or improved, rather than restricted.

I understand that your Committee and associated panels can only act when directed by the ACT Government. To that end, I have written to the Planning Minister and the Direct Sales Division, requesting that any sale of ACT Government land for this purpose include a condition requiring Design Review Panel input prior to DA submission.

We trust the Committee will take these concerns seriously and consider them in any future deliberation or policy formation related to the Hawker Shopping Centre redevelopment.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I am available to meet or provide further information as required.

Yours sincerely,

Deane Russell

Director

Belconnen Way Hotel

77 Belconnen Way, Hawker ACT

