



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: 037

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Good morning Committee, this submission is being made by:
Damon Kelly (and family)

The submission is in relation to the ongoing conversation around the Hawker Village Shops Redevelopment plan and the associated petition documented at [Inquiry into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment - ACT Legislative Assembly](#). My understanding is that the committee is seeking submissions to the inquiry which relates directly to the petition opposing the direct sale application by Woolworths and proposal for redevelopment of the area. I note that to my knowledge, there is not a lot of information relating to any updating of the previous proposal which outlined a large number of residential dwellings included in the plan, nor is there much information about specific plans for the proposed site for sale to Woolworths.

I'm not sure exactly what kind of input this committee is seeking, but I wanted to provide a few thoughts as a local who has grown up in Hawker (from the age of 13, now 46) and potentially provide a mixed perspective of the proposed redevelopment of the Woolworths site (ie not strictly opposed to change, progress or development, but keen to see it done well). I am a home owner in Hawker and have two children who currently attend Hawker Primary and Belconnen High School in the suburb. My parents and parents in law both live in Hawker and with 33 years living in the suburb and supporting the local shopping centre almost exclusively for groceries, medicines, petrol, health care, post office and most of the other services provided within the shopping centre, I feel well qualified to provide some input and perspective into any proposed redesign. My thoughts are as follows:

- Hawker shops is popular not only because it's well supported by locals, but because people are prepared to travel from surrounding suburbs for the convenience and simplicity that the village provides. Town planning and theoretical development aside, the reality is people drive away from Coles Jamison, Woolworths/Aldi Kippax, Supermarkets at the mall, underground car parks (including the new Belconnen markets) and 'mixed use' developments full of apartments because they're inconvenient, busy and overwhelming, especially for elderly shoppers (which Hawker has in abundance). This needs to be considered in any proposed redesign of Hawker Village and the small, street level and spacious offering which is appreciated by so many in the area should be retained.
- Any redevelopment of Hawker shops should NOT be focused around high density

residential buildings to justify transport hubs. It simply doesn't work in Canberra, the reality is we are a city who relies heavily on vehicle transport as an overwhelming preference and to pitch a proposal without acknowledging that would be disingenuous. It will just inject more cars, more people and more complexity/traffic into the area, absolutely ruining all the attractive things about the village which bring people to the area. In terms of medium/high density housing, Hawker already has more than it's fair share when compared to other established, original Belconnen suburbs. The original proposal of building 6 floors of apartments was absolutely ridiculous, and for many of the long term residents completely ruin the shopping centre and surrounding area. The idea of one of the large Canberra developers churning out another low cost high, profit development for their personal gain with little consideration of the enduring community is completely intolerable to most.

- One of the things which makes Hawker attractive, both in terms of lifestyle and real estate value is access to many services. It's a fact that Hawker has an aging population and those who move into the suburb are typically mature aged. Hawker Medical Centre, Capital Pathology the dental centre, physiotherapy, Thai Massage and others are all critical services to the community. Hawker residents rely on these services and they should not be disrupted or replaced by specialty shops which add little or no community benefit. I would urge any potential development to consider not only retraining the existing medical/wellbeing facilities, but ensuring continuity of service, ie do not bulldoze the entire village and have those medical services rendered unavailable, leaving local patients (again many of them elderly) to find new care providers. Perhaps a staged approach to ensure continuity would be most appropriate.
- Consideration of high density buildings on the Hawker Village site should take into account the existing high/medium density concentration as well as any potential longer term developments, for example the existing site for Larkham's Tennis Centre which will no doubt be heavily developed at some stage. I can confidently say that Hawker locals would not support the suburb becoming a hub for concentrated high density housing, it is the polar opposite of why people have bought into Hawker, and why many of the original owners of Hawker properties (since the mid 70s) are still living in the suburb. Hawker is known and loved for it's large established blocks, birdlife and greenery, not for poorly built, poorly designed high density housing by the same old Canberra developers who thrive on mediocre developments sold by glossy brochures.
- I think I can speak for most Hawker residents (and surrounding suburbs) by saying that Hawker Village is certainly suboptimal, there is definitely room for improvement and refreshing the current outdated infrastructure. The key is to redevelop tastefully in a staged approach, and retain the medium size and accessibility that makes it such an attractive option for West Belconnen residents. I am in support of the redevelopment of the Woolworths, into a full sized store however I would hope that consideration is given to the likely customer base (elderly) when designing overly tight and inaccessible underground car parks. In a previous proposal, there was an incredibly disingenuous image of an empty carpark (probably on Xmas Day) used to portray a lack of use for outdoor parking at Hawker shops. Having driven past the shops on a daily basis for 30 years I can say that with absolute confidence, all the

outdoor car parks are well used, typically at 50-75% capacity. Again, the convenient parking is what makes shopping at Hawker an attractive proposition. Any survey work for traffic and car parking should be very well considered and an appropriate amount of convenient parking be made available.

- If a redevelopment of the broader shopping centre is to proceed, thought needs to be given to providing continuity of existing services (in particular medical/Chemist/post office) services. I would hope that existing shop/business owners would be given priority to resume business in an updated/redeveloped shopping centre. Some of the businesses have been operating successfully since the Village opened in 1975, while many others have been around for 20 years or more. To take the opportunity to purge existing businesses in favour of Woolworths affiliates or to use redevelopment to leverage new and more profitable partnerships in the area would be a mistake. The existing businesses are successful because they have relationships with the community and have served for many years, they rely on loyal and appreciative customers in return.

In summary, redevelopment of Hawker Village is required, but should focus on optimising the aspects and characteristics which make it so popular, and enhancing it by adding suitable restaurants/bars and community spaces which can leverage loyal and supportive local patrons. Existing businesses should be respected and supported to continue to thrive in any new plans. A village feel should be retained and any high density housing proposals should be subject to significant community consultation (plans have been actively rejected several times in the past for good reason). It's my understanding that there are no current plans for residential development on the Hawker Village site however it is very clear in Mr Chris Steel's Ministerial Statement that it will likely be raised again in the future and this process should not be one of ignoring previous consultation and simply grinding the local community into submission.

Thanks you for the opportunity to provide input and opinion.

Regards,

Damon Kelly (multigenerational Hawker local, home owner and dedicated supporter of local business)

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