



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: 064

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From:
To: [LA Committee - Environment](#)
Subject: re proposed commercial purchase of public land at Hawker shops
Date: Friday, 18 April 2025 12:19:46 AM

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Dear Committee,

I'm writing to express my concern and opposition to what I understand is a proposal by Woolworths, to purchase the Hawker shops' parking lot and other public land there, for major commercial developments.

I have lived in the neighboring suburb of Weetangera since moving here as a young teenager with my parents and siblings in 1984. I know this part of Belconnen to be as nice a place as any. Thus, after a decade or so living interstate and abroad (starting ~1998), I returned here permanently in 2013. I am hopeful of remaining here for perhaps another decade, provided there are not too many degradations in our everyday neighborhood.

Underground parking, multistorey developments and other dramatic alterations at Hawker shops are among several prospective degradations. Others include a proposed childcare centre on a residential lot facing Weetangera Primary School, and foreseeable widening and traffic control measures along Coulter Drive (a beautiful corridor of trees between Weetangera and Macquarie). Coulter Drive's practical function as a northern extension of John Gorton Drive has brought dramatically increased traffic from the rapidly expanding suburbs of Molonglo in recent months and years, and it will only get much heavier with many new suburbs still being built, plus the huge new bridge under construction at Coppens Crossing. The unwelcome burden of traffic already on Coulter Drive increasingly impedes Hawker and Weetangera residents' access to Jamison Centre in Macquarie (=Coles+ALDI, Woolworth's main competitors), and to central Canberra beyond it. Traffic lights and road spaghetification will not make the place any nicer. In recent years we already increasingly shop at Hawker shops to avoid the traffic. Woolworths will surely do well from every aspect, regardless of whether they can acquire public land there.

Hawker shops' open carpark and largely outdoor ambience are in fact quietly treasured for their functional serenity, even if the decor of Hawker shops' public areas has seemed rather neglected since the ACT Government began. Woolworths' proposal would transform the shopping area's character to just another crowd-attracting mall, as seen by existing long-term residents like myself. Moreover for several years (the prospective remainder of my residency in Canberra) it would be one of few things that's worse - a construction zone. Should the alterations come to pass, I feel pity for our suburbs' future residents, whose move to a relaxed and mature suburb would be thwarted by those developments on their doorstep.

A recent pamphlet by Friends of Hawker Village Inc says "the alternative option -- making upgrades/improvements within the existing footprint of the centre -- has not been proposed" [to date]. To my mind that suggestion would be generally preferred by the majority of nearby residents. Fifty years have passed since Hawker and Weetangera suburbs were built and settled into by young families. Consequently, there are many residents who (like myself) have lived most of their formative years and/or adult lives in the neighborhood. Such folk have decades of observational experience of changes to our neighborhood and its public places, that have been both good and bad. For a commercial entity to acquire and develop the carpark area around Hawker shops would be bad.

Without adequate consultation it would in any case undermine and disrespect the function of the local government.

For a commercial entity to consult local residents would be little more than a waste of their resources. Woolworths should nevertheless be allowed and encouraged to thrive within the boundaries that public divisioning made available in Hawker when they moved in. And it's very likely they shall. However, it is the job of local governance to defend those boundaries and the interests of residents who use and appreciate those places.

Please don't give commercial enterprises the power to alter the character of our suburbs without prioritising the people whose homes and lives are affected by it.

Sincerely,
Wilfred Fullagar