



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment
and Planning

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment

Submission number: 069.1

Submitter: Friends of Hawker Village

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Supplemental information from Friends of Hawker Village

Following the Committee Hearings on 28 August 2025, we would be grateful for the Committee's consideration of the following supplemental information:

A. Responses to Committee questions

1. What is the size of the current Woolworths Metro supermarket at Hawker and what is the size of a full-line supermarket?

We have seen references to two different floor areas for the current Woolworths Metro supermarket at Hawker: 1 574 sq m (provided by Woolworths via online correspondence) and 1 640sq m (Woolworths Direct Sale Application, Economic Assessment, Pack 1, p.24 at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24089100>).

A full-line supermarket is usually 2 500sq m or more, with Coles and Woolworths usually building full-line supermarkets of at least 3 200sq m. The current proposal is to expand the Hawker supermarket to 4 150sq m (including Direct to Boot and BWS). According to documents released under Freedom of Information (FOI) (Pack 2, p.56 at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24089100>):

If the Woolworths proposal increases the floorspace of a shop by more than 2 000m² then consultation with the National Capital Design Review Panel will be required before a development application is lodged. This is because the land is located in a commercial zone (see *Planning (General) Regulation 2023* Part 4 Div 4.1 Section 11(b)).

2. How does the Direct Sale process work?

An explanation of the Direct Sale process, together with a diagram of the general steps in the process (also included in the ACT Government's Submission to this Inquiry), is provided in the Meeting Brief to Minister Steel on pages 54-64 of the Pack 2 FOI documents (link as above).

The ACT Government's Submission to this Inquiry includes the following explanation:

Since a conceptual master plan for the site has been provided, this is also being assessed from

a strategic planning context. As a result, a range of technical and other planning assessments have been undertaken (this is discussed further at 'Current planning assessments') to assist the determination of the direct sale application. Once an assessment of a direct sale application has been undertaken by EPSDD, it is provided to the Direct Sales Panel, comprising Senior Officials across Government for consideration. For Woolworths application, the Direct Sales Panel will make a recommendation to be provided to Cabinet, through the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, for consideration and determination.

Where a direct sale is recommended by Officials, the advice also includes recommendations on any conditions that should attach to the determination of eligibility for the direct sale of land. It is common for direct sales to be generally conditioned upon the applicant obtaining approval of a development application (DA) for their development proposal, from the independent Territory Planning Authority. A DA process includes public consultation, which provides the community with the opportunity to have a say on the development proposal, through an independent process, prior to the sale of the land being finalised. The sale of Territory land is sold at market value.

And from the letter to Woolworths (28/2/25) (Attachment to ACT Govt Submission):

Prior to a formal decision on the direct sale application, EPSDD invites you to consider the feedback provided and explore revisions to intended land use that more closely aligns with the Territory's strategic objectives and policy settings. EPSDD would also expect that you meaningfully engage with the community prior to submitting any revisions.

In response to Friends of Hawker Village's (FoHV) request for clarification about the process, EPSDD confirmed that the Direct Sale of public land associated with the Woolworths Application would be conditional on an approved Development Application (Personal correspondence, Shaboz Kandola (EPSDD) to Colin Lyons (FoHV), 20/12/24).

In relation to a decision about whether the land should be sold, EPSDD also advised:

There are a range of considerations and assessments undertaken to help decide if the land should be sold and inform any assessment of the direct sale application. For example, consideration is given to existing planning strategies for the area and the feedback received from the community through consultation processes that led to the development of the strategies. Site investigations may also be utilised to inform considerations regarding land use for the locality of a direct sale. (Personal correspondence, as above.)

The Committee may also wish to note the comments by the Minister for Planning's (13/8/24) in response to questions from the Chair of this Committee, Ms Jo Clay MLA, regarding Woolworths' proposal to purchase the Springvale Drive car park (<https://questions.parliament.act.gov.au/details/9f1f6b50d5c048e1b05e7cb13781ac8e>) .

In his response, the Minister stated the process for the assessment of eligibility for a Direct Sale and confirmed that an eligible proposal would proceed to a Development Application, with the sale of land generally conditioned upon an approved DA.

The obvious questions which follow from all of this include: Has there been a considered decision that these blocks of land, including the public car park, are available for sale to a developer? Who decided this, and how?

The Government has noted, in notes for a Ministerial meeting with Woolworths on 1/8/23 (p.36 of Group 2 FOI documents), that no blocks in Hawker had been identified on the 2023-24 Indicative Land Release Program.

The following statement appears as part of the explanation of the Direct Sale process (p.60, Group 2, FOI documents):

When a direct sale application is received, the Government will first decide if it wants to sell the land and then decide if selling the land directly to the applicant is the appropriate way to sell the land.

There seems to be little point in considering a Direct Sale Application – particularly for significant blocks of land in established areas -- unless there is a sound process for determining whether the land should be sold. The prospective buyer and seller will always have a vested interest in the design, conduct and outcome of any consultation on an Direct Sale Application.

B. Responses to information provided by Woolworths

3. Population-based “need” for a full-line supermarket at Hawker

We did not get a chance during the hearings to respond to a comment by Andrew Loveday (Director of Property Development for the Woolworths Group Ltd).

In his comments to the Committee on 28 August 2025, Mr. Loveday noted that Woolworths’ case for a full-line supermarket at Hawker relies on a population-based national benchmark or national algorithm. (This is also noted in the company’s Direct Sale Application.) According to this benchmark, a full-line supermarket is warranted for every 8,000 – 10,000 people. With an estimated primary and secondary catchment population for Hawker of 28,000, that would mean 3.5 - 4 full-line supermarkets for that population.

Woolworths’ calculation does not, however, take account local shopping patterns, nor other distinct ACT characteristics, such as detailed planning in relation to the location of supermarkets, better road networks, and suburb-to-suburb public transport. This suggests that, like other aspects of Woolworths’ proposals (including a tell-tale cut-and-paste reference to a Queensland development in their Hawker Direct Sale Application), the assumptions about a population-based “need” for a full-line supermarket at Hawker reflect a lack of local knowledge and understanding.

With the retail expansion at Kippax providing 2 full-line supermarkets, and full-line supermarkets at the Jamison Centre and at Westfield Belconnen, the number of full-line supermarkets will actually exceed the number that Woolworths claims is needed for this catchment area (Hawker, Weetangera, Scullin, Page, Macquarie, Cook, Florey, Higgins and Latham). Supermarkets at Jamison, Kippax and Westfield Belconnen were considered to be part of the local market for Hawker in the ACCC’s 2013 competition assessment of Woolworths’ proposed acquisition of the Hawker Supa IGA. (See: ‘Market definition’, para. 34

at: <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/public-registers/documents/MER13%2B9090.pdf> .)

While the ACT's suburban design means that, except for a full-line supermarket located at the Jamison Centre in Macquarie, these larger supermarkets are not located within the actual boundaries of the Hawker catchment suburbs, they are within a few kilometres and are easily accessible by private or public transport. (There is also a full-line Woolworths supermarket at Charnwood, which is 8 minutes' drive from Hawker and closer to some of the secondary catchment area suburbs). Shoppers may prefer to visit full-line supermarkets in larger centres for the opportunity to access other shops and services (e.g., department stores, large sporting good stores) that are unlikely to be located at Hawker.

Justifying a full-line supermarket at Hawker on the basis that it would provide local shoppers with access to a greater range of products without having to travel further afield does not stand up to scrutiny -- this same claim could be made to support the case for a large supermarket in *every* suburb!

This is an important issue: the entire justification for the proposed sale of public land and subsequent development, including replacing the easy and accessible street-level parking with basement parking, rests on the claimed "need" for a full-line supermarket at this location. There must be real questions about applying the "national benchmark" approach to Hawker without taking local factors into account.

4. Consideration of local demographics and shopping patterns

Mr. Loveday's comments at the hearing regarding population-based benchmarks confirmed that Woolworths is taking a cookie-cutter approach, rather than a more nuanced approach, to arrive at the "need" for a full-line supermarket at Hawker.

While the Direct Sale Application includes references to the Hawker catchment area having a population which is older than the ACT average, there is no attempt to consider the implications of this in their proposals.

The feedback received by FoHV indicates that older residents have a strong preference for an intermediate-sized supermarket and for street-level parking with level pedestrian crossings adjacent to the shopping area. The Hawker centre's convenient parking and shopping arrangements were cited as a key reason for some older residents moving to the adjacent suburbs.

There is also no attempt to consider either the evidence about the "quick shopper" being the high-value shopper, with a greater spend per minute (<https://www.choice.com.au/shopping/everydayshopping/supermarkets/articles/supermarket-sales-tricks>) or, importantly, the evidence about changing shopping patterns, with fewer people doing a big weekly shop and more people shopping several times a week (<https://thenightly.com.au/business/the-once-a-week-supermarket-shop-is-in-decline-heres-what-coles-and-woolworths-expect-next-c-14781390>). These patterns have also been borne out by FoHV's experience of observing and talking with shoppers at Hawker.

5. Support for/opposition to full-line supermarket and basement parking at Hawker

We did not have a chance to respond to the further comment by Mr. Loveday regarding feedback that Woolworths has apparently received in support of a larger supermarket at Hawker.

It should be noted that the feedback received by FoHV differs substantially from what Mr. Loveday reported that Woolworths has received. Feedback to FoHV has consistently favoured the retention of the Metro-size supermarket rather than a desire for a full-line supermarket at Hawker. This difference is perhaps understandable, as customers are more likely to complain when they believe that a situation is unsatisfactory (i.e., “I wish this store could be larger”) as opposed to providing positive comments when they are happy with a situation (i.e., “I really like the size of this store”).

FoHV has engaged directly with shoppers at the Hawker centre on at least 20 occasions during the period 2023 - 2025, for a total of more than 70 hours. Many shoppers took the opportunity to tell us why they shop at Hawker and how they would be impacted if the Metro were replaced with a full-line supermarket. Foremost among shoppers’ reasons were the ability to park and shop quickly and easily, due to the manageable size of the Hawker supermarket and the proximity of parking. Notably, these comments were made not only by older customers, but also by parents for whom convenient and time-efficient shopping is a priority.

We also conducted a survey of Hawker shoppers who attended the Weetangera Primary School fete in November 2024. Of those who completed the survey, 81% lived in the primary catchment area and 85% shopped at Hawker at least once a week. Among the findings from this survey:

Supermarket size:

- The majority (58%) of all respondents preferred a Metro over a full-line supermarket at Hawker.
- A Metro was preferred by a majority of shoppers in all age groups except for the small number of those in the youngest age group (age 18-29), who had an equal preference for a Metro or a full-line supermarket.¹
- When grouped according to frequency of shopping visit, all categories reported a preference for a Metro.

Basement parking:

- A majority of respondents in nearly all age groups said that basement parking would make them less likely to visit the Hawker shopping centre, with those over age 50 overwhelmingly saying that they would be less likely to shop at Hawker if basement parking replaced the street-level parking.
- One-third of those younger than 50 said that basement parking would make them less likely to shop at Hawker.
- No one over the age of 50 said that basement parking would make them more likely to shop there.
- Twelve percent of respondents (all under the age of 50) said that basement parking would make them more likely to shop at Hawker.
- Of the 28% of respondents who preferred a full-line supermarket at Hawker, one in 5 said that they were not sure about this preference if it required basement parking.

Although the resulting report did not highlight this finding, the 2023 community engagement exercise conducted for Woolworths by Communication Link found that two-thirds of people who provided feedback either did not support the full proposals or said that they needed more information.

Given that Woolworths has said that basement parking is necessary for a full-line supermarket at Hawker, it is important to understand that there is significant community opposition to basement

¹ Age breakdown of survey respondents: 8% were 18-29; 15% were 30-39; 31% were 40-49; 13% were 50-59; 20% were 60-69; 13% were 70 and over.

parking at Hawker, as also evidenced by the 544 signatures on the Petition.

C. Remaining questions about the process

6. Following the appearance at the 28/8/25 hearings by representatives of ACT Government, and even without considering the revelations of the documents released on 6/2/25 (see Section D, below), FoHV believes that there are a number of unanswered questions regarding the process for the proposed sale of Government-owned land at the Hawker centre. These questions include:

- What sort of scrutiny is undertaken in relation to an Applicant's claims for meeting the grant objectives for a Direct Sale, particularly with regard to "public benefit"? How can this be a rigorous process if there is no opportunity for the community to respond to these claims? Is consideration given to other approaches for achieving the desired outcomes?
- Why would the Government not take a more holistic approach to planning for the Hawker centre and re-start a Master Plan process? Why has the community had to wait 13 years for the Govt to take any interest in this shopping centre – and even now, it is being left to a private developer to propose a Master Plan?
- In what ways has the ACT Government followed the 2012 advice of then-Minister Andrew Barr MLA to reflect on the lessons of the draft Master Plan, other than placing this in the "too hard" basket?
- How has feedback from ACT Government agencies been taken into account in the decision to continue the Direct Sale process, with Woolworths invited Woolworths to submit a revised Direct Sale application (see Section D below)?

D. Findings from additional Freedom of Information documents

Background

The FoHV submission to this Inquiry includes our response to documents released on 4/11/24 following our FOI request in relation to the 2024 Woolworths Direct Sale Application.

On 6/2/25, a substantial release of additional documents relating to the Woolworths Direct Sale proposal was made available through the City and Environment Directorate's Disclosure Log (<https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24134326>). FoHV became aware of this release only after the close of Submissions to this Inquiry and after the August 2025 Committee Hearings.

The Group 2 documents contain comments from ACT Government agencies who are members of the Land Requests Advisory Committee (LRAC). These agencies were invited, on 23/10/23, to respond to the Hawker Vision Pack provided by Woolworths as a precursor to their Direct Sale Application.² The agency responses were not publicly available before the release of these

² Among pages which the Committee may find of particular interest are: 1-5; 7-12 (letter of invitation to LRAC members); 64-69; 76; 84; 91; 98-99; 103; 133-137; 151-153; 169-176. Correspondence from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, at p.199 of the JPS Engineering report may also be of interest.

documents, and there was no publicity around the release of the documents. The documents also include the lengthy Stage 1 Site Investigation Report (August 2024) prepared by JPS Engineering Consultants Pty Ltd.

These documents are notable for providing important perspectives on key aspects of the Woolworths Direct Sale proposals. The documents show that a number of agencies raised serious concerns about the proposed Direct Sale, with some expressing clear opposition (see Key concerns and recommendations, below). Other agencies had no views or did not oppose the proposed sale.

As many of the matters and perspectives reflected in these documents were not mentioned in Submissions to the Inquiry nor aired in the recent Committee hearings, we believe that it is important for the Committee to be aware of these documents and their contents.

Key concerns and recommendations

Agency responses are summarised in the document, “Agency comments in response to the Hawker Woolworths Vision Pack” (p.1-5 of the Group 2 documents at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24134326>).

Among the concerns and objections by ACT Government agencies:

- The land is potentially independently saleable and should be considered for release through an open and competitive process:

“As there is very limited supply of appropriately zoned and suitable Unleased Territory land in the ACT the request is not supported.” (email, Development and Implementation Division, EPSDD, 25/10,23, Group 2 documents, p.69)
- There may be better concepts which do not require the sale of so much Territory land:

“[I]t hasn’t been demonstrated why the applicant considers this is the preferred outcome. For example, it isn’t clear how the development ties into the surrounding area, how the current pedestrian spine is maintained/improved, if the central public space will be in open air/sun, etc. There may be a better concept which doesn’t require as much Territory Land to be sold.” (email, Statutory Planning, EPSDD, Group documents, p.84)
- “Seemingly independent (i.e. not integrated) focus on supermarket function (with ancillary tenancies) rather than consideration of community well-being of urban amenity relative to improving existing open space . . . AKA (also known as) over development of the site.” (Response from Development and Implementation – Infrastructure Projects, EPSDD, Group 2 documents, p.66)
- “The Hawker Group Centre Masterplan [is] not finalised and until such time it is **not** recommended to proceed with the proposed sale.” (original emphasis) [Note: Comment then refers to a Masterplan which could be continued by the applicant rather than by ACT Government.] (Response from Development and Implementation – Infrastructure Projects, EPSDD, Group 2 documents, p.66)

- Surface car parks are a future resource for green infrastructure. The current land use ‘Vision’ would significantly add to the heat island effect by displacement of trees and open space. Any sale should be conditional on exceeding ‘Canberra’s Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the City’ policy position of 30% canopy cover and 30% permeable surface. The ‘Vision’ may also be inconsistent with District Strategies with regard to blue green infrastructure. (Response from Development and Implementation, EPSDD, Group 2 documents, p.66)
- Because of the significant increase in floor space, it was suggested that the required consultation with the National Capital Design Review Panel should occur before, rather than after, LRAC consultation:

“... I’d consider this proposal should be presented to the NCDRP prior to being placed on LRAC circulation. . . . [this] will give the LRAC & the Minister some level of confidence that the Territory won’t be selling land that is either not required or results in a poor outcome. . . .” (email, Statutory Planning, EPSDD, Group 2 documents, p.84)

- A number of ecological impacts are associated with the proposed development, including multiple trees which provide habitats for small woodland birds. Any development would need to protect mature native trees, as well as conform to the Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide and require a Construction and Environment Management Plan to be approved by the Conservator. (email from Conservator of Flora and Fauna, 16 May 2024, JPS Engineering Report, p.199)
- Significant trees on the site require protection:
 - “[T]here are two high quality remnant eucalypts located on block 26/33, about where the basement entry is proposed. . . .” (email, Statutory Planning, EPSDD, Group 2 documents, p.84)
 - “The Tree Protection Unit would oppose the removal of the regulated remnant *Eucalyptus blakelyi* and the regulated remnant *Eucalyptus melliodora*, situated on the Springvale Drive nature strip adjacent, as they are of high quality.” (email, Conservator of Flora and Fauna, Urban Treescape, TCCSD, 1/11/23, Group 2 documents, p.151-153)
 - “[T]here are two significant remnant [eucalypt] trees on Springvale Dr and we would not support their **removal under any circumstances**.” (original emphasis) (email, Development Assessment, TCCS, 20/11/23)
 - “[T]he Group Centre is a localised urban heat hotspot and has limited tree canopy and other living infrastructure. The proposed development would further reduce tree canopy and green infrastructure as it would require removal of all trees and hedges on the site. . . Current “street trees” on the Hawker Place and Springvale Drive frontages of the site . . . would be removed under the “Vision Masterplan” provided.” (Early LRAC circulation comments – Woolworths Hawker vision pack, Group 2 documents, p.169).
 - “The trees shown in the Vision concept plans along Springvale Drive are unlikely to be achievable due to overhead electrical infrastructure.”
 - “The existing verge to Hawker Place is narrow for a commercial precinct and would not sustain large street trees at their current width.”

- “The ‘street trees’ on the Hawker Place and Springvale Drive frontage are located on Block 26 Section 33 [car park], rather than in the verge.” (Agency comments in response to the Hawker Woolworths Vision Pack, Group 2 documents, p.4)
- “Removal of mature/established trees, minimalistic replacement within the proposed redevelopment boundary.” (Response from Development and Implementation, EPSDD, Group 2 documents, p.66)
- Concerns regarding potential direct impacts on the Hawker Place road reserve and on other lessees within the Hawker shops site and adjacent blocks (particularly residential); impacts on vehicular access off of Hawker Place; impacts of traffic movement via Block 33/33 Hawker, which is not part of the Direct Sale proposal; and impacts related to waste truck movements and to the location of loading docks in relation to noise impacts on adjoining land users.
- Traffic modelling analysis is required at key intersections and carpark access points. Safety issues and proposed mitigation measures must be identified, including for vulnerable road users. Current Hawker Place road reserve access must be addressed, including current access between Block 13, Section 33 and Hawker Place (Belconnen Way Hotel).
- Provision for active travel must be maintained, including pedestrian access links within and around the centre.³

Post-LRAC actions

Woolworths met with representatives of the EPSDD on 17/11/23 to discuss the LRAC agency comments (correspondence from Clinton Cashen, 24/11/23, Pack 3 documents, p.60 at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24089100>) and was formally advised of the agency responses on 23/11/23 (Document 24_134326-Documents.pdf at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24134326>).

Woolworths was encouraged to prepare a more fully developed concept for a future Direct Sale Application that responded to the issues raised in the agency comments.

Other than requests for follow-up discussions with some agencies (see below), we do not know exactly how Woolworths responded to the agencies’ comments. FoHV’s FOI request for this information was refused, with EPSDD informing FoHV that, “*One document was identified to contain information relating to Woolworths Group’s response to agency advice on the direct sale enquiry and proposal. . . . I am satisfied that the disclosure of this information is not in the public interest, at this time.*” (Letter from Jeremy Smith, 28/10/24, Document FOI-24_089100-Decision-Letter.pdf at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24089100>).

Documents released as part of the FoHV FOI request show that Woolworths sought to follow up on comments from Icon Water and from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna (correspondence between

³ Note: No mention is made of the current pedestrian access to Block 21, the location of the Hawker Medical Practice and other health and medical services, nor of the current bus route which travels along Hawker Place.

Woolworths and Clinton Cashen, 9/8/23, Pack 3 documents, p.33 and p.65 at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24089100> and correspondence between Clinton Cashen and Canberra Town Planning, 28/11/23, Pack 3 documents, p. 62 at <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/about-us/access-government-information/disclosure-log/disclosure-logs/epsdd-24089100>).

The Woolworths Direct Sale Application was submitted on 28/3/24. As at 20/12/24, the EPSDD had not provided recommendations to the Government on the sale of the land at the Hawker centre or on Woolworths' Direct Sale Application (Personal correspondence, Shaboz Kandola (EPSDD) to Colin Lyons (FoHV), 20/12/24).

In March 2025, the Minister for Planning, without referencing other concerns, announced that the Woolworths Application would not be accepted because it failed to include provision for residential development. Woolworths was invited to submit "a revised proposal which more closely aligns with the Government's and community's expectations for the site" and to "engage meaningfully with the community" on any revised proposal (https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2821290/Ministerial-Statement-Update-on-Hawker-Group-Centre.pdf).

FoHV response to additional FOI documents

The views expressed in the additional FOI documents raise further questions about the Government's approach to the proposed sale of this land. In particular, why was Woolworths encouraged to proceed with its Direct Sale Application, given the concerns and objections raised by the ACT Government agencies? Was consideration given to alternative options to improve the Hawker Village shopping area? To what extent have the agencies' concerns and objections been satisfactorily addressed in the Direct Sale Application submitted by Woolworths in March 2024? Or do we need to wait for a Development Application, at which point reaching agreement on significant changes in response to community representations is notoriously difficult?

This information has resulted in the strengthening of FoHV's view that, while the Hawker Village shopping area is in need of attention, the Direct Sale to Woolworths of ACT Government-owned land at this centre is not appropriate and is unlikely to deliver the best outcomes for the community.


Friends of Hawker Village

3 September 2025