



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

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Submission No 18 -

Ms Margaret

Matthews

Inquiry into Giralang

Shops

Received - 24/03/21

Authorised - 01/04/21

[REDACTED]
24 March 2021

The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA CITY 2601

COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO PETITION No 4-21 CONCERNING GIRALANG SHOPS

I value the opportunity to make a submission to the ACT Assembly regarding the future of the Giralang shops debacle. I have been part of the community that participated in the very first consultation meeting with the developer where their original proposal of only providing town houses on the site was soundly rejected by the community. To the developer's credit they have attempted over the many years since to accommodate the desires of the community to have local shops while at the same time dealing with the various legal actions taken against the development. Legal actions that we now know were at least partly motivated by the owners of the Kaleen Supabarn being in negotiations with Coles to sell the Kaleen supermarket to them. This was occurring at the same time that the Giralang developer was in negotiations with another large supermarket to be the lead tenant in the Giralang shops.

Since then of course due to negotiations sponsored by the ACT Government the developer had a quite different development proposal approved but still with the intention of providing local shops.

Giralang was planned and developed in such a way that the school, commercial space and sporting fields would be the hub of the suburb and the network of paths through the suburb all weave their way to this 'hub'. The idea of everyone being able to walk to local facilities was innovative at the time but is now more important than ever. With more people working from home, an aging population and concerns for the environment being able to walk to local facilities makes for a healthier and more sustainable neighbourhood.

I believe amenities, including a supermarket, café and restaurant and hopefully other facilities are important within walking distance for residents. Being able to walk to a local centre has many advantages.

- 1 It encourages residents to walk more in the suburb. This in turn leads to better health outcomes.
- 2 Having more people out in the suburb makes outdoor spaces safer for everyone and especially for children.
- 3 People are more likely to not use their cars if they only need to walk a short distance to local amenities.
- 4 Shorter distances make it easier for older people and people with disabilities to access amenities, for example using electric scooters. In addition, people will have a

local gathering place which can decrease the isolation often experienced by people with restricted mobility.

- 5 Local amenities would be a benefit to women. Women are still the most likely to be at home caring for children or other family members and easily accessible amenities will make it more likely they can meet other residents and therefore they will be less likely to experience isolation.
- 6 The definition of place of work has changed and some people will continue to work from home after COVID 19 restrictions are completely lifted. These workers also will benefit from the proximity of shops and other community facilities as again they provide a place to meet others to maintain social interactions and develop local networks.
- 7 COVID has also changed buying habits and people are more inclined to shop and spend time in their close environment and support local business.

For these reasons the original Giralang plan works better than ever now. In addition, the Giralang school is at capacity, the sports fields are in high demand and the expansion of Lawson and the development of the CSIRO site to the west of Giralang will all bring more through traffic to the area.

The problem is that the development has been stalled for far too long. What residents the community have now is an unsightly mess right in the heart of the suburb. **We need something to be done and we need the government and the developer to work together to solve this mess.**

I am not a town planner but I can really see benefits to having a local centre back in Giralang. Some of the ideas that have been discussed with friends and neighbours that may help make local amenities viable include:

- Increasing the size of the supermarket back to the original 1500 sqm to encourage a lessee. (Woolworths, Aldi or a specialised outlet such as a Mediterranean supermarket).
- Providing some government incentives for local services such as a medical practice to establish in the development. Perhaps the ACT Government could set up a shopfront for example.
- Cafes and bakeries are always popular and would certainly support a renewal of community spirit and cohesion.
- The Government could lease space in the development for community use. The community house no longer exists in the neighbourhood so a space in the centre could be available for seniors, playgroups, exercise programs, etc.
- The Government could provide discounts on government services to the site until it is fully established.
- Last year the government announced funding to renew 17 local centres around Canberra. Surely some funding can be provided for Giralang.

I am sure the planning authority has many suggestions as to what services and facilities will make the site a viable local centre once again.

This issue is one that I feel very passionately about. While being excited about having local amenities again, I also know that nothing will happen without some help from the Government. This issue has dragged on for far too long. I realise there is no easy solution, but I am equally confident that there will be a solution that provides an invigorated new centre for the suburb while also meeting the commercial needs of the developer. Let's all work together to get this finished!

Your faithfully,

Margaret Matthews

