



ACT

Government

Environment, Planning and
Sustainable Development



Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Legislative Assembly Building
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

cc: Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister

Dear Mrs Dunne

**Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 7 of 2016: Certain Land
Development Agency Acquisitions**

I refer to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts' Inquiry on 27 September 2017, into the Auditor-General's *Report No. 7 of 2016: Certain Land Development Agency Acquisitions*. I refer specifically to the Committee's line of enquiry about rights of Aquis Entertainment over Block 24, Section 65 in the City (the Glebe Park land).

I understand that the document produced by the Committee during the Inquiry was a copy of a Brief (reference BM15/2736) to the Chief Minister, which provided information on a proposal submitted to the ACT Government by Aquis Entertainment for the redevelopment of Casino Canberra and surrounding precinct.

I would like to clarify for the Committee's benefit, that Aquis Entertainment does not hold any rights over the Glebe Park land. The land in question is unleased Territory Land and Aquis has never held a lease, licence or other interests over any part of the Glebe Park land.

Having reviewed the Brief in the context of the Committee's line of enquiry, I acknowledge that paragraph 30, when read in isolation, lacks clarity in referencing "...Aquis' rights to Block 24 Section 65." For absolute clarity when read in isolation, it would better read '*proposed rights*'. Paragraph 30 ought to be read in conjunction with paragraph 12 of the same Brief, under which details were provided about Aquis Entertainment's proposal for, among other commercially sensitive matters, *future* property rights for the Glebe Park Land.

Paragraph 12 was redacted in full through the Freedom of Information process, due to certain commercial in confidence matters being included in that paragraph. To assist the Committee I have provided what details I can in terms of what was included in that paragraph, for clarity. If the Committee would like a copy of the Brief, Paragraph 12, with less redaction to support my advice above, that can be arranged.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate to the Committee the reasons for the purchase of the Glebe Park land by the Territory in 2015. As you would already be aware, Coranderrk Pond restricted the development potential of land for the City to the Lake Project, including the proposed realignment of Parkes Way. The pond was found to be ineffective for managing stormwater and required relocation. The Glebe Park land was considered to be the most suitable position from an engineering perspective and accordingly, the land was purchased on this basis.

I hope this information clarifies the enquiry made by the Committee during the Inquiry on 27 September 2017.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Ponton', written over a horizontal line.

Ben Ponton
Director-General
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

26 October 2017