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Planning in Canberra

1 message

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To: mick.gentleman@act.alp.org.au

Wed, May 31, 2017 at 9:14 AM

Mick Gentleman, MLA
Minister for Planning
ACT Legislative Assembly

Dear Minister

Hello Mick, trust you are well. My failing faculties have required me to take a back seat lately but I am moved to support what The Guardians of LBG and Tony Powell have been saying recently about planning in the ACT.

Briefly :

1 I believe your government's proposal to permit private residential buildings near the NE corner of West Basin will not only put a visual *barrier* between the city and the lake but as I understand the legislation private development on the lake edge is an illegal misuse of public land. The Kingston Foreshore development shows how commercial greed and insensitivity can disrupt public access to a public facility.

2 There is little enough *readily accessible* open parkland near to the city centre already and what open space remains should not be seen as available for more buildings which only attract more people, more cars and carparking space (hor. or vert.) West Basin land is much more valuable as open green space. The character of Commonwealth Park established on the eastern side of Commonwealth Avenue Bridge should be allowed to continue through to the National Museum to more firmly establish the 'garden city' principle initiated by the Griffins.

3 I can see little alternative to the growing need for a tunnel connection between Northbourne Avenue and Commonwealth Ave. Bridge to siphon off the through traffic from the local city traffic - but unless it goes underground around Haig Park it could divide the city into east and west which would be undesirable. This could at the same time include the north-south light rail connection - but the levels would need careful consideration to decide its feasibility. The current planning of the light rail Civic terminal may need some bold re-thinking but now is the time to consider the integrative implications of piecemeal planning. Timing is critical.

4 Haig Park - please remember that it was originally planted by Weston as a protective windbreak for the city area around 1913 and any development involving the removal of trees will weaken this still-needed function. Please keep it intact with some appropriate care and reinforcement .

5 Current development indicates that private developers have a Sydney or Melbourne 'mindset' as a pattern for Canberra. This does not fit comfortably with the concept of a 'bush capital' which dared to be different. ACTPLA and LDA staff do not have the foresight of the NCDC in terms of professional planners who have a long-term practical and aesthetic vision and who are completely independent of commercial interests. It appears from all the contacts I and others have had with planning and control authorities that 'sensitive' public servants are now rather rare, having been apparently replaced with financiers.

6 Finally, although not in your bailiwick, ANU and NCA are seeming to act contrary to common sense in handling their ruthless demolition of Bruce Hall; its replacement in relation to the significance and achievement of Griffins' University Avenue axis and the inadequate public showing of planning proposals. If the black hall of residence recently opened on the corner of Clunies Ross St. and Dickson Rd. is any indication of a new Bruce Hall to come (same architect) then I have lost all faith in the design competence of the architects and the relevant controlling authorities. Its black form is psychologically unsound as a Hall of Residence; its appearance has no semblance of grace or elegance as a home for young students, and its indicative thermal performance may well run contrary to all that sound building science would prescribe. It does not put into practice what ANU research scientists are recommending to mitigate global warming. If our high profile national university ignores its own research findings what hope have we all got ?

7 We have a 'Government Architect' but the community never hears of her views on planning matters. Why is this ? Her advice should surely be a critical input in all ACT planning and architectural matters of interest to the community.

Kind regards

Derek F. Wrigley

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