



LAKE BURLEY GRIFFIN GUARDIANS

Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Environment
and Acting Minister for Cities
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: Greg.hunt.MP@environment.gov.au

29 January 2016

Dear Minister Hunt

The Lake Burley Griffin Guardians is a group of professionals concerned about significance of Lake Burley Griffin and its lakeshore landscape. We believe this magnificent designed and constructed lake system belongs to all Australians.

Because of our concerns we are writing to you as both Minister for Environment and Acting Minister for Cities as both portfolios should consider our concerns.

The national heritage importance of Lake Burley Griffin and its Lakeshore Landscape

In response to your invitation to submit national heritage nominations, the Lake Burley Griffin Guardians are proposing Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Landscape be assessed for the National Heritage List (NHL). Our submission has been lodged with the Australian Heritage Council.

Lake Burley Griffin and its lakeshore landscape is a distinctive and beautiful lake system and is the unifying core of the national capital. It is of great significance to the Australian nation as the heart of the national capital and is also a significant social and recreation resource for the citizens of Canberra.

Lake Burley Griffin and its lakeshore landscape was first proposed for heritage listing over 17 years ago. Other nominations to the National Heritage List and a nomination to the Commonwealth Heritage List have ensued, as follows:

- Lake Burley Griffin Conservation Area (AHC National Estate – [1/01/1999](#))
- Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Parklands to the National Heritage List (two nominations) – [2/09/2011](#) & [26/01/2014](#)
- Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands to the Commonwealth Heritage List – [2/03/2010](#)
- The lake and its landscape surrounds is a component of the two nominations for Canberra assessed for the National Heritage List.

Of these nominations, *Lake Burley Griffin and Adjacent Lands* was assessed by the Australian Heritage Council, for the Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) and *Canberra* assessed for the NHL. We also note

that the CHL assessment needs upgrading and although Commonwealth Heritage nominations were not invited for 2016 we request that you may give your permission to submit information to upgrade that assessment. The attached nomination to the NHL is an upgraded version of the Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Parklands 2014 nomination and we sincerely hope that this nomination will be considered for national significance in its own right.

The lakeshore landscape has suffered a few detrimental impacts in recent years and is now seriously under threat from a large building estate proposed for West Basin. As well as appropriating West Basin's public parkland, we are concerned that the development will damage vistas from the significant symbolic route between Commonwealth Avenue and Parliament House.

Adverse impacts proposed to the City of Canberra

Canberra is an Australian 20th Century City that can celebrate quality, beauty, its community and importantly demonstrate a long-term vision for our nation. However, there is a confrontation happening between national character and city growth. Compromising the integrity of Lake Burley Griffin by this conflict must be avoided.

Currently a high and dense building development is proposed in the public lakeshore parkland of West Basin coupled with very high gateway buildings at the entrance to Commonwealth Avenue. All of this development will block the vistas across the Lake between the northern entrance of Commonwealth Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. The impacted area is a major component of the symbolic road route from the City of Canberra to the Parliament of Australia and represents a major national vista.

Lake Burley Griffin was constructed under the direction of Prime Minister the Hon Sir Robert Menzies who also inaugurated the lake in 1964 and named it in honour of Canberra's designer, Walter Burley Griffin. He noted:

... This is of the essence, this is the heart of the city, and I hope it will be a heart that will be quietly beating, not noisy, not uproarious – a quietly beating, restful heart for the rest of our lives.

The Lake and lakeshore as constructed came to fulfil Menzies' vision and is greatly loved by Australians, particularly Canberrans. The execution of the design and construction won a design award in 1986. Lake Burley Griffin belongs to all Australians and is not the property of the ACT Government to consume according to a desire for real estate revenue. The citizens of Australia own the Lake along with its environmental values, lakeshores, vistas, and heritage,

The high and dense building development proposed by the ACT Government will deprive Australians of the public lakeshore parkland of West Basin. We hold that the Commonwealth has an incontestable obligation to uphold and protect this land for all Australians.

Recently an amendment to the National Capital Plan (Amendment 86) was initiated and completed. It is awaiting review and approval by the Hon Paul Fletcher MP. There are aspects of the National Capital Plan (NCP) and the amendment that are useful but we have serious concerns regarding the proposed development at West Basin and near City Hill.

We submitted our case on these concerns during the review process only to be advised in the subsequent Consultation Report that parts of the Exposure Draft on which we commented were not relevant to the Review. We see this as a lost opportunity to attend to these troubling and flawed planning concerns dating back to 2006.

We regret that amending these aspects was not possible when the Amendment (86) was modified.

Historical shortcomings that blatantly detract from the national significance of the Lake have accumulated incrementally. For this reason we are prosecuting a case for the Lake's protection by seeking the repeal of those sections of the National Capital Plan responsible for this erosion of national significance by means of a further amendment so that the flawed planning dating from 2006 can be rectified.

Conclusion

A national heritage listing for Canberra may prevent the appalling appropriation of the Lake Burley Griffin foreshore for real estate development. We are concerned that the finalising of the heritage assessment for Canberra that your Department undertook in 2013 is taking an unnecessarily long time and we feel those with development interests may be purposefully thwarting this action.

In addition a National Heritage Listing for Lake Burley Griffin could sit as a significant centrepiece within the national significance of Canberra. It would ensure the Lake was considered as an entire landscape unit and managed as such rather than the piecemeal management that occurs today.

The beauty of Canberra and its lake landscape deserves to be protected by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. By comparison Adelaide Park Lands are on the National Heritage List and collectively has its own *Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005* to promote its special status.

In stark contrast Lake Burly Griffin lacks national recognition and is continually disregarded for heritage listing.

We attach a copy of our NHL nomination and a letter of support from the ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes.

Sincerely



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Attachments:

- Letter from the ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes
- Nomination of Lake Burley Griffin and Lakeshore Landscape to the National Heritage List