



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**(Reference: Auditor-General's report No 7 of 2008:
Proposal for a gas-fired power station and data centre—site selection)**

Members:

**MS C LE COUTEUR (The Chair)
MR B SMYTH (The Deputy Chair)
MS J BURCH**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2009

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr S Lilburn (Ph: 6205 0199)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Committee Office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

WITNESSES

ADAMS, MR TONY, Senior Director, Planning, CB Richard Ellis**93**
SINCLAIR, MR HAMISH, Vice President, ACT Division, Planning Institute
of Australia (ACT Division)**93**

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Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 2.02 pm.

ADAMS, MR TONY, Senior Director, Planning, CB Richard Ellis

SINCLAIR, MR HAMISH, Vice President, ACT Division, Planning Institute of Australia (ACT Division)

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your attendance today at the public accounts committee hearing into the Auditor-General's report No 7 of 2008: proposal for a gas-fired power station and data centre—site selection process. There is a privilege card in front of you. Have you read it and understood it?

Mr Sinclair: Yes.

Mr Adams: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, and you are happy with the conditions. Do you have any opening remarks?

Mr Adams: They are fairly brief. It is set out in our submission. I represent the Planning Institute of Australia, ACT division. The submission that we put together has been prepared by a subgroup of the Planning Institute of Australia, ACT division, being the consultant planners group. I am here representing them. My companion, Hamish Sinclair, also represents the same group. I am a consultant town planner in Canberra and I work for CB Richard Ellis. I was engaged by Technical Real Estate and Actew on the gas-fired power station data centre project, which is to some extent the subject of this inquiry. I have been asked by the Planning Institute to assist them in their submission. Their submission is on more strategic and bigger picture issues. I am here in that regard, rather than to respond to details related to the actual project itself, if that is okay.

THE CHAIR: That is fine. We decided that when we did this inquiry we wanted to focus on the future and getting it right in the future rather than the nitty-gritty problems with the data centre.

Mr Adams: I am not commissioned, I am not engaged. I have no relationship to TRE in these proceedings.

Mr Sinclair: I am a consultant planner from GHD. Similarly to Tony, GHD was involved in preparing an environmental impact statement for that project. We are not engaged currently in doing any further work for that client. I just thought I would mention that we have had that former interest.

Mr Adams: By way of opening remarks, I reiterate some of the points made in our submission, which are essentially that, when addressing the question of strategic planning or strategic projects in the territory, it is necessary, I think, to look at strategic planning in the territory in general. We believe that that has fallen down a bit in recent times. We believe that the relationship between the NCA and the territory is continually on the table. It needs to be moved forward. At the moment it is a little disaggregated.

Within the ACT context, we believe that strategic planning has fallen between a number of different agencies. We have said in our submission that we believe it should be perhaps focused in the Chief Minister's Department, which has the capacity to take an across-agency approach to this. We have said that the management of the territory plan, which, if you like, is the implementation of planning in the territory, should remain with the planning authority.

Since that time and since the date of the submission the government has announced the creation of a new department—the department of property and land, or land and property, I think it is calling it. As I understand it—and all I really know about it is what I have seen in the *Canberra Times*—that department is to incorporate the functions of what was the strategic projects or major projects area in the Chief Minister's Department, the Land Development Agency and the property area from TAMS. I think we see that as, in part, going a way towards implementing what we were looking for. It is not in Chief Minister's but it is an agency that, to some extent, is able to draw together other functions.

It is very important in the ACT that strategic planning and the land release and land development function are taken together, because land is fundamental to planning and control or administration of the land supply is really quite important. We see that potentially as a step forward in line with the submission. I think that department comes into existence on 1 December. That is the date I was told. I am not sure about that. We are not sure how it is going to pan out and exactly what they will do. It is a little bit unknown at the moment. I think that is all, unless, Hamish, you have got anything to add.

Mr Sinclair: There was one other matter and that was that the current Planning and Development Act provides for a strategic overview plan. It is called the planning strategy. We are very much of the opinion that the government should invest some time and resources into developing that particular plan. I am mindful that the national capital plan, metropolitan plan, has not been updated for 16 years or more, that the Canberra plan and the spatial plan are both non-statutory documents and that the planning strategy really gives you an opportunity to advance your thinking in a new direction, perhaps picking up some of the climate change issues et cetera. We would encourage the government to resource that and develop it, ideally in conjunction with the commonwealth, so that it is an overarching document that is coherent to both planning frameworks.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I had not realised—I suppose I should have—that the Canberra plan was not a statutory document. Can you tell us a bit more about the statutory document that is 16 years old?

Mr Adams: That is the national capital plan.

THE CHAIR: Is that the only statutory document that we have above the territory plan?

Mr Adams: Yes, except that the new planning act gives the spatial plan the status of a strategic planning instrument. It sits, if you like, above the territory plan. However, the spatial plan is not a very strategic or specific document. If you read it, many things

in it are not quantified. It says all the right things, if you like, but it is hard to rely on the words when push comes to shove. For example, in the context of a given development proposal, it does not really assist. You really come back to the territory plan.

To be fair, the spatial plan has led to things like the Molonglo development project, but then it also recommends Kowen as the next thing, and that is just not a good idea. They cannot be in the same document if they were done on any sort of infrastructure thinking. Molonglo—maybe yes; Kowen—absolutely not. Kowen is many kilometres of very expensive highway. The nearest sewage treatment plant is a long way away. It just does not seem to be very strategic. It seems to have been responding to forces. I do not know what forces it was responding to. The task is to make it a more strategic document that is better informed by infrastructure considerations.

THE CHAIR: The Canberra spatial plan, as distinct from the national capital plan, or are you thinking we should be changing—

Mr Adams: Here we have got a national capital plan and a spatial plan.

THE CHAIR: And we have got a territory plan.

Mr Adams: And we have got a territory plan. Both the national capital plan and the spatial plan sit above the territory plan. They coincide with each other. Why do we need both? The national capital plan had to be amended to allow Molonglo to go ahead, which was one of the planks of the spatial plan. Why do we go through two processes—a spatial planning process and then a national capital planning process?

Mr Sinclair: I guess the view is that. With Molonglo, there is a good case example with regard to infrastructure planning and the integration of a strategic planning process that has not really underpinned that whole development. Originally, as alluded to, it was identified in the spatial plan but without a context of infrastructure support and how it was going to roll out in any meaningful way. It then had to feed back into the commonwealth's planning process as well. Further reviewing and further research and environmental assessments were required to meet the commonwealth's requirements, almost duplicating the workload. To grab all that together in one package would be, I think, quite useful.

We believe that the planning strategy provides one avenue. The alternative is for the commonwealth to step away from direct input at the local level, to take a more strategic view with the national capital plan, to strip away from it the development control framework and to look at a more strategic planning overview for the territory. There are two avenues there that could be pursued. We are on record previously at a Senate inquiry on the future of the NCA that we saw the national capital plan providing, through its metropolitan framework, the higher level strategic planning framework and the territory plan being very much about development control and development approval, implementing, if you like, that plan. The role of the planning strategy is a bit unrefined and I think we would like to see that developed further jointly with the commonwealth.

MS BURCH: You have made mention of planning, infrastructure and transport

planning. Are you aware that there is a process around transport, providing a skeleton that will then feed or advise or inform planning development? Do you have a thought on that?

Mr Adams: The not so recently released bus strategy, or public transport strategy really, is a great leap forward, but again it was done as, “Here’s the public transport strategy.” It derives in part from a sustainable transport plan. The sustainable transport plan was released separately from and in parallel with the spatial plan. They should not be separate documents; there should be only one.

MS BURCH: Yes, but the plan on the table at the moment, if you look at the request for comment and where it sits, is that if they get the skeleton of transport, if they are able to move our community around sensibly, that will help inform various planning processes where you get high density and low density and where you can get your future build-ups around it. Something needs to be the first point.

Mr Adams: That is very important and that is a good thing to do but it is saying that we want to fix public transport, which is important and there are a whole lot of good things that flow from fixing public transport, but it does not, for example, in the same document say, “And where is the water coming from and where does the sewage go?” All of those things really should be stitched together. The public transport plan might say that it is the greatest idea in the world to have a whole lot of density, somewhere, but that might be too far from the sewage treatment works. The transport plan is an excellent piece of work from a transport perspective but a strategic plan would bring the other factors into being as well.

A difficulty is where the transport plan, say, says that we are going to have high density development in this particular spot. Unless you have done all of the other bits of work to support it, the people who are opposed to the high density in that particular spot, and there always will be some, have got a reason to oppose it. They can go and say, “But you can’t get the sewerage there.” So the debate just falls over. You really need to carry the work together and make it all happen. You also have to recognise that all of that is obviously overlaid with the environmental outcomes that you are trying to achieve and it may be that better public transport—generally this would be true—would give good greenhouse outcomes but if you are doing that in a way that means that the sewage treatment is much more expensive because it has to be done some other way because of the location, that is not a good outcome. So you need to have the objectives, which would be heavily informed by triple-bottom-line accounting sort of things, and look at all of the dimensions at once, and not say, “Public transport is this week’s issue so let’s go out and talk about it.” It is too easy to miss something else that is important.

But, having said that, getting public transport fixed is extraordinarily important and that piece of work is very good, but we would prefer to see it travelling with some other stuff as well. The only reason you do town planning at the end of the day is to get infrastructure and make it cheaper and better; that is why you do it.

Mr Sinclair: Again, it is an example of an individual response and solution to an individual problem, not looking at the holistics of what we are trying to do here in terms of a strategic response to bring in sustainability and all of the other benefits of

the infrastructure. Bring the lot together and then you know where you are going and it has two benefits: (1), that you might get to the end faster with less effort and cost and (2), in terms of certainty the community will understand why things are happening and where they are happening rather than, as Tony alluded to, you have the risk with one plan, it being a one-horse race, that if it falls over you have not progressed anything else. Equally, if you have not progressed the other supporting elements, the argument is always there that it is not thought through properly.

Mr Adams: The other day I was at a lunch where the guy who prepared the bus plan was speaking. You have routes and you have density, and I asked him: how much density we need to support a 15-minute bus timetable. He is proposing 15-minute buses not 24/7 but 18 hours a day, seven days a week, which I think is the minimum; that is all good. I asked: how much density do you need in persons per hectare or dwellings per hectare or whatever? He did not know the answer. They have not done that work. They just say that more density is better. I agree that more density is better, but the people will say, “But what does that mean for my suburb?” If you say it is the odd dual occupancy here and there, they would probably say that they could live with that, but if you say that they have to have 20-storey towers lining their street they will say, “No; the social consequences of having good public transport are unacceptable.” So you really need to move the social planning forward with everything else.

THE CHAIR: So, if we all disappeared and you guys were ruling the ACT, you would start off with the Chief Minister’s Department doing a whole new Canberra plan, as it were?

Mr Sinclair: Yes, very much so. The issue is that, in order to take into account the holistics of the whole of the ACT in development, you really need a context, and that context is a regional one. So you do need to understand what is happening across the border. Really, at the Chief Minister’s level, that dialogue between governments is probably more effective than perhaps if it was advanced at the ACTPLA level.

You also need to have a dialogue with the commonwealth. Again, the Chief Minister’s Department provides an appropriate level to undertake that role. That is where we see bringing those elements together, the political and the planning, at a high level under one direction. That is a key thing. Land supply and land release, of course, is the other element.

Mr Adams: Strategic planning for Canberra and region. The border is just a line on a map; it is pretty silly. We would probably have trouble and never agree, but we will get there eventually. If we were both kings of Canberra, he could have the north side and I would have the south side! I am referring to a single strategic plan to meet New South Wales, commonwealth and state government interests. It is pretty silly that we have got a spatial plan and I doubt whether the term “Parliament House”—I might be wrong—occurs in the spatial plan for the city of Canberra.

MS BURCH: Because it is excised.

Mr Adams: Yes, because they do not have any responsibility for it. It should say, “Parliament House is here because it’s here,” and things flow from that. It is silly having this division in planning. There might be reasons for having the administrative

divisions, but most cities in Australia have a couple of different layers of planning, with different organisations having different responsibilities. You can sort that sort of stuff out. But we should have a document that says, “This is Canberra; this is where it is going.” And it should say, “We’re going to have this level of public transport service delivery in these corridors and, in order for that to happen, we need this level of density extending 500 metres out from each corridor,” and that density is 40 persons per hectare or 500 persons per hectare; I do not know.

You can then explain to people the implications of that and show them photos: “In Sydney, 50 persons a hectare looks like this block of flats,” or whatever. You can explain it and say: “We’re going to service that with this infrastructure. This is where the pipes and wires go.” We have got enough of that sort of thing. And we are going to deliver a power supply—little things like power supply all comes on the grid at the moment and we all use coal-fired power. The government has put out a good initiative with their tenders for a solar farm. That is one item. Some parts of London have distributed power all over the place. They have little gas-fired power stations scattered around the city, producing a small amount of megawatts. If you want those things, that is probably a good idea. It seems to work well there. But no-one wants them next-door to their house, probably. So you probably want to know where they are going to be.

The strategic plan would actually set goals—and these days they can be pretty simple: certain tonnes of carbon reduction, certain social outcomes, and affordability is a big ticket item. It is easy to say higher density; that translates to non-affordability these days, usually. It is quite expensive to build high density housing—more expensive than it is to build three-bedroom cottages at Macgregor, for example. You can buy a three-bedroom cottage at Macgregor for the same price as you can buy a one-bedroom unit, because the construction costs are higher. Those things all come into it.

MS BURCH: You made mention of the Chief Minister’s Department. There are two things: the role of the Chief Minister’s office in facilitating strategic projects and, given there was significant comment around community consultation, again, it is a matter of saying, “Yes, I want it, but not next-door to me, thank you.” So is there a role for strategic projects facilitation as part of this proce

Mr Adams: I think there is. Most jurisdictions have got to the point where they have some sort of special circumstances for really big projects. In New South Wales, they call them major projects if they are above a certain dollar value and, if they are, they are on a different planning approval track which involves the minister rather than the council or whatever. Whether that is right or wrong, whether their process is good or bad, I am not sure. Most jurisdictions seem to have the need for this, and I think we have it here as well. The ordinary planning system usually works fine, but sometimes things come along which are different, bigger or have a degree of importance and level of interest to the government over and above ordinary developments. So there should be some sort of role for strategic projects.

It would also apply to government projects that the government, for reasons of its own, puts a higher priority on. Quite often, things that government does are controversial by their nature—things like a prison or whatever—so you might need something extra. Whether it is Chief Minister’s or not, I am not sure. When I worked as a consultant in

Queensland many years ago, they had a thing called the coordinator-general's department, which was a great name. So there was the premier's department and then this organisation coordinated all the other departments. But it worked well. That was 30 years ago and bureaucracies were different.

MS BURCH: But the intent was that strategic big picture?

Mr Adams: The intent was that it could take a big picture view across departments. That might be part of the role for this new department they are setting up here; I do not know. Involving the Chief Minister's Department as such makes things overtly political. I think the Chief Minister and his department tend to be the flagship of the government. So it could be that there is another agency whose job it is to be strategic rather than the Chief Minister's Department; I do not know.

MS BURCH: So the function is critical—

Mr Adams: Yes.

MS BURCH: but sometimes where it sits could be perceived as political rather than strategically broad, community based?

Mr Adams: Yes.

MS BURCH: There are a number of comments around community consultation—that there was not enough, it was chicken and egg, do you consult before the DA, after the DA and all of that. As planners, what is your view of community consultation? There is notice, there are the standard letter drops into X number of streets in the area. Do you have a view on that?

Mr Sinclair: Canberra has, I think, suffered a certain degree of over-consultation. As Tony alludes, major projects are a special case. Things like the data centre perhaps warrant your own tailored response, quite separate from the usual development approval process. So you really have to tailor these things to meet the need. One of the improvements we looked at was the current structure of the EIS and DA processes; we need to integrate the two. Previously, with the old system and with the preliminary assessment, you had a public consultation process, but not a decision on that. Then you had the DA process, which had a decision. The assumption was that if you had gone through the PA process you had pretty much concluded that it was okay, so what was the point of the DA?

I feel we may well have replicated that with the current process, where the EIS stands separate and alone and decisions on the environmental impacts are made in advance of the DA and then the DA is again consulted. Really, you get two bites of the cherry but only one decision, and that decision has already been made with regard to environmental impacts, so what are you actually achieving in consulting?

MS BURCH: They are two separate things, though.

Mr Sinclair: They are—

Mr Adams: Well, they are not.

Mr Sinclair: But they can be run together.

Mr Adams: I cannot see the difference between a planning assessment and an environmental assessment. I have been a town planner for 30 years, and anyone who tries to tell me—sorry, no offence—that the stuff I have done has somehow ignored the environment is wrong. If you read the territory plan and find out what sort of assessment has to be done of every ordinary, bog standard development application, they are required to essentially do an environmental assessment. That is what the territory plan says.

MS BURCH: So we do not need an EIS?

Mr Adams: Well, they are the same thing. I just take them together. The bigger the project, the more complex the project or the more the project might impinge on sensitive environmental values, the more work you have to do. But you do not need two processes. You need big processes and small processes, complicated processes and simple processes, depending on the nature of the proposal. But you do not need separate processes. How can you get an approval for something over there under the territory plan? The territory plan basically says you are not allowed to do anything that is environmentally unsound. That is what it says. How can you get an approval under that and somehow not get an approval under an EIS? And the opposite: how can the EIS say there are no environmental impacts of this proposal but the territory plan knocks it back? It is just crazy.

Mr Sinclair: Just to clarify my earlier comment about them being separate, currently in the act they are separate. I totally agree with Tony here that, as a planner—and I have only got 20 years experience—in my opinion we do our job considering both elements. It is a holistic process. We sieve all the relevant inputs—the traffic, the environmental and the design—and then we work to a conclusion. We do not do it divorced from the environment. So why divorce the two processes in the way they currently are set out in the act?

THE CHAIR: I do not really know why they are, but if this did happen you would support a longer period of time for public consultation, given there would be considerably more—

Mr Adams: But do it once.

Mr Sinclair: Do it once.

THE CHAIR: I am thinking out loud here; you know better than me why it was done. I assume the reason was, if you were going to knock out something on an environment ground, knock it out before you did all the detailed work to do the DA. Is it going to mean that if you did this the pressure on approval at the DA process level becomes more than the pressure of approval at the EIS level?

Mr Adams: You have put all the time and effort into doing an EIS and spent, in the case of the data centre, \$300,000. That is a bad example because it was not taken to its

conclusion. The Cotter Dam is a good one: a huge amount of money spent on an EIS and that is found to be fine, and then you start again with a DA. So the likelihood of the DA being refused is zip, but you are still going through a process. You are going public; you are asking people for their opinions. It is crazy.

Mr Sinclair: With respect to those opinions, again, the scoping of an EIS includes the planning statutory considerations. So effectively when the community is consulted on the EIS they are also looking at the zoning and the policies that relate to that zone and location and the other planning matters. So it is not just a simplistic, pure environmental and ecological type assessment; it is a broad spectrum assessment but without a DA.

MS BURCH: Perhaps I am joining dots that were not there. Assume that environmentally it was sound. The emissions and all that were within safe levels, but people just did not want it: “not next door to me”. I am not being disrespectful to the group, but that applies to any project, whether it is a 20-storey building or whatever. The DA process still allows all of that voice, which is actually quite separate.

Mr Adams: You do not abandon the DA process and have an EIS only. If you are going to roll the two together then there has to be an EIS-DA process and all the rights of appeal and so forth have to be brought into that process. So you have the same thing. You are rolling the environmental process into the other. You retain all of those rights. There is no question of not having them.

MS BURCH: As planners, that is just part and parcel of urban growth, do you think?

Mr Adams: There will always be people who do not want something. We have a territory plan and rules so that there is some certainty in what might happen. The alternative approach is that every time you want to do something there is a vote of the neighbours to decide whether they like it or not. They will all vote no and nothing will ever happen. The consultation process has to be two-sided. It has to provide a fair opportunity for everybody to have their say and, if they are still aggrieved at the end of the process, to take it to the appeal tribunal or whatever. But, at the same time, it has to say, “They’re not the only players in the game, the immediate neighbours; there is a whole of community interest at stake.”

The whole community want higher density along bus routes because it makes our buses work better. It is not a question of what they want and therefore that is the end of it; their views are taken into account. Sometimes their views may prevail and the thing may be refused. That happened with a proposal out at Giralang recently. That is one the planning authority has refused. The planning authority may have refused it anyway, but certainly there were people opposed to it. It is very important not to give people an expectation—which certainly came through in some of the submissions to this inquiry—that consultation means that they get a vote on whether a thing should go ahead or not. That is not the case. Consultation means that their views are fairly put and fully considered.

Having said that, the other side of the coin is that people who spend money putting up a proposal do not put it up if they think it is likely to be knocked out by the neighbours objecting to it. They certainly will not put it up if they think the

neighbours will raise some drop-dead issue that kills it, that proves that it is contrary to the territory plan in some absolute sense. They just will not bother. So it is not unusual, but in probably nine cases out of 10 the comments that are received do not have any effect. They have to be considered. If proposals just occurred randomly about the town then you would expect that half the time the neighbours' comments would have validity and the proposal would be refused because of the reasons raised in the neighbours' comments. But projects do not go ahead on that basis. A project only goes ahead on the probability that it is legal, that it meets the requirements of the territory plan, that it ticks the environmental requirements—whatever they may be on that site—or that you have got a fair idea that it is going to do that. Then and only then do you bother to go ahead with the time and expense of putting a proposal up to the DA or EIS stage.

It is really quite difficult—it is certainly hard for politicians—to say, “We’ve heard your views but they didn’t make any difference.” But in nine cases out of 10, I think that is likely to be the case because projects do not move forward, generally speaking, that are more likely to fail than not. I do not think it is very helpful in our environment. You cannot divorce consultation. Consultation involves the public. Public involvement involves the political system, inevitably. The political system in Canberra is, for better or for worse, almost inevitably a minority government system which has an influence, which makes a difference. The *Canberra Times* and the press generally I do not think assist in bringing impartial information. They tend to pick up on the conflict elements and highlight those. When there are objections to a proposal by whoever, they can get prominence and the thing can get more of a life than it might otherwise have had and the proponents do not necessarily get a fair hearing. The press do not assist in a well-informed consultation process.

MS BURCH: Can that generate a disinterest from developers, if there is a culture of that around the place?

Mr Sinclair: I think so. If you are putting a large sum of money up for a development, you want a certain degree of comfort that you are doing the right thing in the right place. That is what the strategic planning framework is about. It is about saying, “We anticipate this level of growth in this location so you should be looking to go there.” It appears that on occasions developers simply go across the border where they perceive the process is easier. Again, if the EIS-DA process were tightened up and brought together as a more coherent process, it may assist bigger projects looking to the ACT as an opportunity to locate. Again, they would want to be informed as to our strategic vision and where they should be looking.

Mr Adams: The main concern of developers is uncertainty. They do not care if they have to go and consult for 10 weeks or twice over two years—as long as it is certain that they do that, that it is fairly considered, that it is a fair process and that there is a decision on it within a known time frame. Most developers that I work with do not have any problem with consultation. They are more than happy to do it. Some would even go so far as to look for good ideas from the community. I always encourage them to do that because in all of the processes that I have been involved with in the community some of the stuff that you get when you advertise something can often improve a project. You look for that and that is good.

THE CHAIR: To get it a bit more concrete in terms of the idea of putting the EIS and DA together, say we were back doing the data centre and the EIS process, would it have meant that the EIS process would not have started until a few months later? In a big project like, say, the Cotter Dam, on the grounds that that is less politically contentious, what would happen?

Mr Sinclair: I think that with the Cotter Dam it would have shortened the process by several months. It would have given people perhaps a bit more clarity about the process and the outcome. There is uncertainty about the EIS process, what it actually means and what you can achieve through engaging in that process. As I said, there is a discount in that you then lose interest in participating in the actual decision process, which was the DA.

If you brought the two together, I think developers would look to improve the consultation as one complete package. Again, as I understand it, that project has a fairly extensive consultation component to it before, during and, I suspect, after the DA process. As an example of something that is a big project and has a fairly intense consultation strategy attached to it, it is what you would expect for those kinds of things.

Differentiating to the lower level—the standard development around town, if you like—that can be much more targeted and localised because the effects are localised. It might be the street or the neighbourhood that needs to be consulted. Again, if you can pull that all together in a succinct way with a strategy up-front—and good developers and consultants do this—you can bring the community in and get that feedback, which really helps the project.

Mr Adams: People in my office have been working with Actew on the Cotter Dam project and GHD are involved in it as well. It is a very small town. My perception of the Cotter Dam project is that if you had simply cancelled the DA process on that project it would have made no difference at all, other than saving four or five months. All of the information that was necessary for anybody to consider any aspect of the project was out there with the EIS. It was published with the EIS. As it happened, that project was called in. Therefore, there were no appeal rights. If it was some other project, you could not just rely on an EIS process and cancel the DA process. You would want to actually write appeal rights into the EIS process and that is not difficult to do. So if you cancel the DA process and put the appeal functions into the EIS process—and they apply variously across the territory; people have appeal rights for different reasons—you save time. The Cotter Dam EIS is three volumes, or about that, thick. You have no doubt read it. There is nothing in the DA that was not already done and dusted.

Mr Sinclair: The issue there is that three or four months does not sound a great deal, but when you have got holding costs on a development, you have contractors on hold and you have the cost of administration in the process as well, it is a significant chunk of development money that is sitting there and burning for no real advantage.

THE CHAIR: What is also significant is the amount of community energy.

Mr Sinclair: Absolutely.

Mr Adams: They have to do two submissions.

THE CHAIR: They have to do two submissions. It is not just the developers.

Mr Sinclair: There are costs on all sides, without a doubt, for no effective gain.

THE CHAIR: Gentlemen, thank you very much for attending. This has all been recorded by Hansard. When the transcript has been prepared, our wonderful secretary, Sandra, will send you a draft of it. If you have any problems with the *Hansard* please let us know because it will become a public document.

Mr Sinclair: If there are any other questions which the committee wish to ask of us at a later date, we are available.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Mr Adams: I guess in a general sense the Planning Institute is here to help. If the committee, outside of any particular inquiry, just wants to talk about things, that is what we are here for.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 2.43 pm.