



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
PLANNING**

(Reference: [Inquiry into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment](#))

Members:

MS J CLAY (Chair)
MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)
MR P CAIN
MS C TOUGH

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 21 AUGUST 2025

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Secretary to the committee:
Mr J Bunce (Ph: 620 50199)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 11.35 am

GREGORY, MR JOHN
WINSER, MS SUZANNE

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to the public hearings of the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning for our Inquiry into Petition 002-25: Hawker Village shops redevelopment. Today we will hear from the residents about what they want to see happen in Hawker.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal People. We would like to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of our city and our region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event or who might visit this recording or watch it at another time.

Witnesses, please speak one at a time and we will do the best we can to make sure we pick up your voices clearly. For anyone observing in the room, we are so glad that you are here, but please do not interrupt proceedings. If you want to respond to any of the evidence discussed today, we can do so in your session when it is your turn to talk, or you can have a chat to our secretary at the end of session if there is something else that you think needs to be covered.

We are recording and transcribing with Hansard, and these will be public proceedings. If you cannot answer any questions—these are not trick questions, we are here to listen to what you have to say. Just answer—tell us what you think you want us to know, answer to the best of your knowledge and just speak from your own experience. If you are taking a question on notice, say, “I will take that on notice.” We do not usually ask people to take questions on notice unless they are the government. So, there is no expectation that you would be—

Mr Gregory: —or fire some back at you!

THE CHAIR: This is also entirely appropriate. You can tell us the things you think we need to find out, which is probably a better flow. So we will start by welcoming John and Suzanne to the panel.

Ms Winsor: I am appearing in my own capacity.

Mr Gregory: I am appearing in my own capacity. I am a Hawker resident.

Ms Winsor: I am a Hawker resident, too.

THE CHAIR: Awesome. That is great. This is a legal proceeding of the Assembly. It has the same standing as proceedings of the Assembly, of our parliament. So today's evidence attracts parliamentary privilege. Giving us false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the Assembly. But of course, as I said, tell us anything you have to say. If it is your opinion, it is your opinion, and that is okay. I will just stop and see if anybody would like to make a brief opening

statement, first.

Mr Gregory: I would, if that is okay?

THE CHAIR: John, please do.

Mr Gregory: Yes, I have just a couple of points to make. I want to personally say thank you for having us here. Thanks for doing the walk-around today of Hawker shops. We really appreciate it. There is a bit of confusion as to—we are down as supporting. I just wanted to clarify that I am supportive of the initial Woolworths proposal, pending some conditions.

But I am not supportive of the proposal or media release that was released by Minister Steel in the inquiry. I believe a considered development should occur at Hawker shops, and shop-top housing should not be included in any current or future proposal. I support the initial development by Woolworths, with conditions of adequate parking, playground facilities and public toilets. But again, I do not support shop-top housing.

I would like to make a couple of quick points about my thoughts on the current proposal from Woolworths. Regarding a supermarket, I do not think the current supermarket services the needs of the community, and any government sale of land should include the provision for a full-line supermarket, whether by Woolworths or any other developer. While I think there are issues with the direct sale approach, I think the reality is that Woolworths are the only company that have the available land to include a full-line supermarket in the area, noting that they own the buildings.

My second point is that any redevelopment should be self-sufficient, particularly regarding parking. Under the Parking and Vehicular Access General Code, Woolworths with their current proposal, or the proposal that was denied by the government, would need approximately 400 carparks. However, their proposal was only for 246 carparks. Shop-top housing would require even more parking on top of that. The government has made their intention clear that they want to keep developing, which may in future include Hawker's other carparks. So insufficient parking in any development that occurs first will have flow-on effects for generations and be detrimental for the community.

I believe also that financial benefits from the sale of government land should support the community, and they should be conditions of any sale of land. So this could include: upgrades to the other carparks that are not being developed and not included in the current proposed sale; a playground, in an alternate location that could be government owned and government maintained, as the current government owned playground would be lost; and newer public toilets, improved facilities to be included in any sale of government land. As you would have seen today, there is some poor outcomes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Gregory: You want me to stop there?

THE CHAIR: I do want you to stop there. I would invite you to table anything else

that you have prepared as we would love to receive it.

Mr Gregory: No worries. No dramas.

THE CHAIR: Suzanne, do you want to make a statement, or should I just start with the first question?

Ms Winser: No, I do.

THE CHAIR: Yes, go ahead, please.

Ms Winser: First of all, I have to tell you that I volunteer at the Hawker Community Garden.

THE CHAIR: With Frances.

Ms Winser: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Great!

Ms Winser: Yes. Frances has given me a submission that she wanted me to give up to the committee today.

THE CHAIR: We would love to accept that as a tabled document.

Ms Winser: I have already handed it over.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is brilliant. So we have taken that as a tabled document.

Ms Winser: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I am so pleased we have Frances's views.

Ms Winser: Yes. Frances does apologise because she just could not make it today.

THE CHAIR: That is okay.

Ms Winser: After saying that, I am speaking on my behalf and not as a volunteer person at the garden.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Winser: I agree with everything so far that John has said. I think now we are in a position, with what Woolworths have offered, to look ahead and to be innovative in what we want to do with that land. Hawker shops—I understand you have all been there this morning—to me, is dirty, it is dingy and it is dangerous. When I say that, I mean in my professional background. Many, many years ago, I was a police prosecutor in New South Wales. I would not take my dog into the toilets at Hawker shops, and I actually wonder whether I would even take my dog up to Hawker shops at present. It is so dirty. It needs redevelopment.

Actually, when I first heard about this, I thought it needs to be demolished and rebuilt completely. Now is the time for us to do it. Now is the time to be able to look ahead, say what has happened with other shopping areas around Canberra, and work with Woolworths, not against them, but work with them, to get something that is going to suit our community. As far as our community is concerned, every quarter there is a fete up at Hawker shops, which is put on by the community gardening people. It does not have very much attention and they do lots of advertising. If we want our community to grow, and to get money in, we have to make it a welcoming area. At present, Hawker shops are certainly not welcoming.

As I was explaining to John earlier, I have a very big safety issue. I really believe in our community being safe. The ATMs are right next to a roadway, although it is a little roadway. One of the things I have seen, and I have certainly been involved with, is someone taking money out of an ATM late at night, or an elderly person taking money out of an ATM, a car drives up, someone jumps out, grabs the money because they can push the person into the things, jumps in the car and they have an egress, very easy. I do not think that is safe. I do not use those ATMs for that reason. I do not like using those ATMs because they are not, to me, safe. There are too many people, not too many, there are a few people, that do lurk, for want of a better word, around that area. I think I am pretty handy but I do not think I would like to take anyone on up in that area.

The ATMs is just one part of being safe, the other is the toilets. In all honesty, I would dare anyone here—ask them why they would take a child into those toilets. They are disgusting. Where is the change table for a mother who has a pram and wants to change their child? Where is the area where a mother can sit down and feed her child without any harassment or any people being indiscreet in that?

THE CHAIR: Suzanne, we will pause there, because there may be specific questions from the committee. I will not ask a question. I will tell you about the two things that I am most interested in; then I will hand over to my colleague Ms Carrick. It is pretty likely that a lot of us will be interested in the same things. Of course, jump in and answer the questions that are of interest to you. Also, if we do not get to something that you want to tell us, you can talk to our secretariat and lodge those comments after the hearing. I am sorry that you have had a short amount of time.

With respect to the things that are most interesting to me, from the 70 submissions that we have seen so far, it is quite contentious to do a direct sale only with Woolies, and not look at what the options are. A lot of people would like more holistic planning for the whole site or master plan. The second issue, which both of you have probably already picked up on in your opening statements, is that there are some other areas of the site that should be sorted out now and integrated, if there is development that goes ahead. Fiona, do you have a question?

MS CARRICK: Yes, I will pick up on that. In other parts of Canberra, they have done master plans, so what would you see as the role of the ACT government in doing holistic planning for the site?

Mr Gregory: Minister Steel, in his submission, has made it clear that they want to do

shop-top housing. They have made that clear in their submission. Because they have now tabled their views, they should now conduct community consultation into what the role of the government should be in this area.

With holistic planning, it is my understanding that there was a master plan previously, 12 to 15 years ago. There was a development proposed by the ACT government which was heavily knocked back by the community. The difficulty around holistic planning now is that all the buildings are privately owned. Some want to develop; some do not. If you look at the Hawker motel, they are individual units. Some may want to sell; some may not. I know that the person who bought Meet-Point House looked at purchasing that whole site to develop it, and ran into issues with the Belconnen motel.

That is the issue with a holistic plan for Hawker and redeveloping the whole place. While I would be 100 per cent supportive of that, I think that the feasibility of it is limited. Woolworths have some of the land; there is some of the land that they can use that is government owned. They have a solution, in being able to provide underground parking. It would be safe and convenient, and provide services that Hawker is really in need of.

THE CHAIR: Suzanne?

Ms Winser: I agree with John. He said that much more eloquently than I would!

MS CARRICK: Basically, you think it is of limited value—the government getting involved with policy planning?

Mr Gregory: I would love to hear your thoughts on it. I do not have the knowledge of how these have gone, with holistic planning of a site such as Hawker. From my understanding of how it is laid out, I would think it would be limited—a holistic plan for the entire site.

Ms Winser: Yes.

THE CHAIR: It is an interesting issue for us to put to the minister next week, when we see the minister. Caitlin, do you have a question?

MS TOUGH: Yes, I have a question on parking. You touched on the Woolworths proposal not having enough parking to be self-sufficient; then, if housing was to come into it, that creates an even bigger issue with parking. What are your thoughts on having underground parking, possibly expanded to be self-sufficient? I am curious to hear your thoughts on how parking would work at a redeveloped site.

Ms Winser: I do not have a problem with underground parking. I believe that underground parking can be a lot more secure, because most of them have CCTV; they have travelators, which allow people that have disabilities or find it hard to get up and down, or have prams, to go from one area into the shopping centre. I do not have a problem with it. I think it is sensible. If it means taking spaces off the top of the land, I am definitely in favour of putting in underground parking.

Mr Gregory: The space at Hawker is really limited, compared to other shopping centres. If you look at Kippax or Jamison, which are just down the road, their space, their car parking land, is much larger than what is available at Hawker shops. Going underground for the area is a necessity, if you want to improve the services that are available there.

I do not have an issue with underground parking. At Belconnen markets, it is nicely laid out. I go there often. How the government has implemented apartment blocks and their requirement for parking has been a real concern. If you look at Cirrus in Belconnen, it is right next to the Belconnen mall, and they have somehow played off the Belconnen mall so that they have no visitor parking. They have shops underneath, and none have been leased for four years, because those businesses have nowhere to park, and there is no visitor parking for residents. The developers have come in, they have taken their money and they have sold off the properties, to the detriment of the people that have bought those properties, because there is no parking available for them.

MR CAIN: Obviously, there are some strong, contrary views about selling off the eastern car park. I am interested in your thoughts, firstly, on putting it out to tender to see whether another supermarket chain might be interested, which would create a bit of onsite competition. Secondly, with respect to refreshing the centre, it is a boutique design, and it does suit a lot of our community. There are certainly plenty of larger-size supermarkets that are not far away. I am interested in your views on those two approaches.

Mr Gregory: Regarding the boutique-ness of Hawker shops, Hawker shops is designed to service the community in Hawker, Weetangera, Page and Scullin. In those suburbs there are about 10,000 to 12,000 people. With respect to having a full-line supermarket, surveys and evidence have shown that, for every 10,000 people, there should be a full-line supermarket. At the moment we are below that for those suburbs, and Hawker is not servicing the community that it is designed to service.

A pop-in, pop-out shop, for us to go and grab milk and food, is the design for Weetangera shops, Page shops or Scullin shops. And that is what Hawker is currently doing for the community. At the moment there is pressure on Jamison, there is pressure on Kippax and pressure on the Belconnen mall, where people go for their full shops.

Regarding a direct sale, I would love to see some more competition in this space. However, as I said in my opening statement, the reality is that Woolworths own the property. If you were to sell off just the car park, you would not have a sufficient supermarket to service the needs. You would have two smaller supermarkets that still cannot service the needs, and they would just compete against each other. I think it would be a bit of a failure. With respect to what would happen, I fully expect that, if the land sells, a supermarket would go in below, with shop-top housing, and there would no future for services in Hawker at all.

That is why I am opposed to shop-top housing. We do not have the available space to continue to spread out in Hawker. We need to go up. Eventually, I expect the area to continue to go up, with commercial services that support the community, and density

around that area. We are already seeing density coming in around the area, with our large blocks in Hawker and Weetangera going to three-family-size, four-family-size blocks. We are going to need more services in Hawker for the community.

THE CHAIR: Suzanne?

Ms Winser: The question about putting that land out for tender was raised recently with me, by somebody else. My issue is: I do not want McDonald's or any of those big food chains there. The thing is that Woolworths are the ones who have put some work and money into what they are planning. They have already bought the other building, and they are saying, "This is what we can do." Do you smack someone for being innovative, looking ahead and saying, "This is what we can do with this land"?

You at least have to give them that option of developing or having the first say. If they do not want it then put it out to tender. I do not think we should, all of a sudden, say, "No; you make megabucks, and you can afford to do the research, so who cares?" Woolworths would have already done a cost-benefit analysis on that property at Hawker. A cost-benefit analysis, if you know anything about economics, costs a lot of money to do. They have already had the foresight and understanding to say, "This has to be changed, and this is what we can do with X amount."

No, I do not think it should go out to tender. I think it should be up to Woolworths to have the first bite of that cherry, whether the government sells it to them or not.

MR CAIN: Thanks for your views.

Mr Gregory: I think that, if it does go out to tender, a full-line supermarket is required in that tender.

Ms Winser: Yes.

Mr Gregory: I agree; I would love to see competition. I would love to see alternative supermarkets. Any tender needs to include better services than what is there now. I do not think that a tender will achieve that, in my view.

Ms Winser: We lost a restaurant in one of those boutique buildings; that has gone to Jamison. It was a really popular Chinese restaurant, and it has gone to Jamison. Our community of Hawker lost a lot of money with that, because we do not have them bringing in money anymore. That was taken over by a health company. Those little boutique buildings, because there are so many of them, are the perfect places to put those health services that we need in our areas. I am not saying, "Get rid of them," or "Don't put anything there." Look at what we can do with them. The health services are needed around Hawker; it is a perfect place to put them all or to direct them to.

THE CHAIR: We are coming to the end of our time. We have talked about shop-top housing. It is great to hear the views there. It is a really good point that there are more people in the region and, once you lose the commercial space, that has gone, as is the ability to have other community or commercial facilities. Do you have any views on whether there should be more housing in the footprint of that area? If there should be more housing or a Jamison-style rebuild, where would you put that, if you do not want

shop-top housing there?

Mr Gregory: Robyn, in her submission, laid it out really well, regarding what has happened in Hawker. Across the road from where KFC and the service station are, that used to be commercial space. That would have been a really good spot for apartments; instead there is low-rise housing there. If we are talking about innovation and what we can think of, we have maybe already failed Hawker in that area.

For the future, though, I think that apartments around the area, reasonably sized, would be appropriate. Jamison has done it really well; they are next to the shops and not on top of the shops. There is space for both apartments and shops, I think. People need services right next to their shops. I used to live on top of a shopping centre in Sydney. It was one of the best decisions I have ever made, because you are able to walk. You do not need to use your car as often. If we are looking at reducing emissions, that is one way we can do it. Those things are really appropriate for the area.

I think that development around the area is great. There is unused land in Hawker and Weetangera that is available for apartments or development, which could have some sort of shops underneath. With something like the tennis centre, we need a childcare centre, so that would be great for a childcare centre. There could be some more housing in that area which is really close to the services but not on top of the services and taking away from commercial space.

Ms Winser: I really like the way that Jamison is set out, with accommodation surrounding the centre. It also includes a little play area for kids and families. I do not have an issue at all with apartments being built on top of Woolworths, as long as they are reasonably priced. We do have a housing shortage and, if they are appropriately priced, you could get people in there that can use public transport, because we have a little bit of public transport that goes through Hawker. I can see parents, mothers, babies and children utilising those spaces, and even people that work full time and that do not want to have children. I am not sure what I am trying to say here, but I think you get the gist of it.

THE CHAIR: Yes. There are good ways to do it.

Ms Winser: There is a good way of doing it and there is a poor way—the poor man's way, and the rich. If you can make it look nice, it looks great. I have spent a lot of time in Europe, and in Europe it goes up and up and up. Nobody wants to go up and up and up, but we could keep it discrete and nice, and looking good—as long as it fits with the environment and with the growing population. I am pretty sure John would agree; with our population of young people coming into Hawker now, it is an influx, and we have to deal with that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you so much for coming today. You are welcome to stay, if you would like to stay.

Mr Gregory: Could I make a closing remark?

THE CHAIR: Yes, you can.

Mr Gregory: You will not hear today from a lot of people my age. People my age do not have the ability to respond to inquiries and be here on a Tuesday. These are people that I am trying to speak for, and there is a large proportion, as we have just heard. Please take that into account when you are hearing about this very different demographic that supports this proposal.

THE CHAIR: Thank you so much for making that point. It has been made by people who are not here today—to be very thoughtful regarding participation by different age groups. Thank you.

COGHLAN, MS ROBYN
GINGELL, MS CHRISTINE
HILL, MS VICTORIA
SKINNER, MS KATY

THE CHAIR: Welcome Christine, Robyn, Victoria and Katy. For the Hansard record, could each of you please state your name and confirm that you are here representing yourself as an individual?

Ms Gingell: My name is Christine Gingell. I am here as an individual. I am responding to the petition to stop the large carpark on Springvale Drive being built on. But, of course, a whole lot of other issues have been raised as well.

THE CHAIR: Absolutely.

Ms Hill: I am Victoria Hill, and I am appearing independently.

Ms Skinner: I am Katy Skinner. I am representing myself. I am a Weetangera resident.

Ms Gingell: And I am a Weetangera resident.

Ms Coghlan: I am Robyn Coghlan. I am also representing myself. I am a Hawker resident.

THE CHAIR: Awesome. These hearings are legal proceedings of the Assembly and they have the same standing as proceedings of the Assembly, of our parliament. Today's evidence attracts parliamentary privilege. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the Assembly. But, as noted to our former witnesses, speak to your own experience and express your own opinions. That is what you are here to do.

Would anyone like to make a brief opening statement? I will say that, with four witnesses, if we do opening statements, we may have no questions. Should we skip straight to questions?

Witnesses: We would like to make opening statements.

THE CHAIR: We are going to do opening statements and everybody will get a chance. I am probably going to step in on you after two or three minutes each. Chris, please go ahead.

Ms Gingell: I have prepared an opening statement. As I have said, my name is Christine Gingell. I have been a resident of Weetangera for 45 years. I take a keen interest in issues effecting residents of Hawker and Weetangera, particularly. I am a regular visitor to the Hawker Village shops. I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this inquiry.

I am extremely dissatisfied with the extent of public engagement undertaken by Woolworths, in its direct sale application. I am also disappointed that there has been

no community engagement undertaken by the ACT government. I believe the direct sale process is flawed and not suitable for a long-established area. The process does not require open and transparent information sharing with those affected by the direct sale application. Many have asked the question: why should Woolworths determine what happens to our local shops? Firstly, public consultation should be undertaken to determine what, if any, public land should be sold and then what it should be used for.

The most important thing for me about the Hawker shops is the low-rise character of the buildings, sunshine and sky views. Additionally, I like the current street level parking arrangements, which facilitate a quick shop and provide a buffer between the shops and Springvale Drive residents. The character of the Hawker Shops has a community feel. With the loss of supermarkets in Weetangera, Page and Scullin, they have become our local shops where we regularly meet with other residents of those suburbs. I do not believe that Woolworths has substantiated a case for a full-line supermarket at Hawker. The statistics do not support their view. Inner Belconnen is well served with supermarkets—and I would refer to my submission for that.

I have spent many hours outside the Woolworths supermarket distributing information leaflets. Notably, Woolworths has not done so. I have also engaged with 400-plus shoppers, inviting them to sign the petition, which resulted in this inquiry. Overwhelmingly, people told me that they like the easy access of the large street level Springvale Drive carpark provides; that they do not like basement parking and often mention the basement parking at Belco markets, saying they no longer go there; that the current size of the supermarket meets their needs; and that the precinct has been neglected—everybody says that—and needs a refresh, but not on the scale that Woolworths is proposing.

The shops are surrounded by low-rise housing of various kinds. A retention of the low-rise character of the centre is important for those residents. The planning minister has put forward the view that shop-top housing should be included in the proposed Woolworths development. I am absolutely opposed to the idea of shop-top housing as part of any changes. This would inevitably mean higher buildings. The residential amenity would be poor. There is no greenspace at the shops. The nearby residents are already suffering from noise from delivery trucks and the Meet-Point venue, which has inappropriate licensing hours.

I would welcome improvements to the Hawker shops. The open areas are dirty, and neither the government nor building owners do anything to make the centre more attractive. I say yes to improvements within the current footprint of the centre, which would not require any sale of public land. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thanks.

Ms Hill: Thank you for this opportunity to present to the committee and participate in a panel discussion. I will make some brief opening remarks.

I have been a resident of Weetangera and Scullin for 33 years. Hawker Village has serviced the needs of my family for many years, complementing other facilities in the broader area. The area of Belconnen has many large supermarkets close by, including full-line supermarkets at the Belconnen Mall, Jamison and Kippax. Hawker Village is

strongly valued by the community as it offers something very different; namely, a shopping environment that is readily accessible, particularly for people with young families, the elderly and people with mobility issues; a shopping environment where people can make a quick stop for groceries and other services; a shopping environment that provides for a totally smooth flow of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, even at peak periods, and it is used by people across the region, not just the surrounding suburbs.

Contrary to the label given to this panel, “opposed”, I am not opposed to the development of Hawker Village. Upgrading the current Woolworths and Hawker Village generally would benefit the immediate and larger region. But it has to be done in the right way—a way that is respectful of the strengths of the current centre and views of the community it serves.

In our submission, we expressed our strong concern over Woolworths’ flawed communication process prior to its original direct sale application. Other submissions expressed similar concerns. I particularly draw the committee’s attention to the specific issues with a report by Communication Link, raising submission 56, by Robert Hogan.

My own personal experience with the consultation was appalling, with the Woolworths representative from Sydney being vague, disdainful and dismissive of any questions. I note that the letter to Woolworths of 28 February 2025 by Minister Steel specifically stated that the Environment Planning and Sustainable Directorate, “would also expect that you meaningfully engage with community prior to any revisions”. This seems to recognise the need for better consultation but is simply not good enough given Woolworths’ past form.

We need a different model of consultation. I believe that it is essential that the government conduct its own consultations on the future of Hawker Village and that this should occur before considering a revised direct sale application for Woolworths. Consultation as part of a development application process is simply too late for meaningful community consultation. An appropriate consultation process would allow for the fullest possible community involvement, with adequate notification processes and time for community input; be rigorous and transparent; include a full range of options and not just what Woolworths wants; and detail the impact of options on the Hawker Village and the community—impact on the neighbours surrounding it, for example—including environment issues and traffic and parking impacts, such as future park and ride potential.

This is an opportunity for a model of best practice community consultation to be implemented. It is also an opportunity for the potential of Hawker Village to be realised in the most appropriate way. I believe the committee has a crucial role to play in this. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Victoria. Katy, we will now hear your opening statement.

Ms Skinner: On so many levels, the planned development of Hawker Village is deeply disappointing, on the consultation scale and on the visionary scale. Certainly, I want to see significant improvements for the site. It is bleak, it is a wind tunnel and it

is very tired.

Change, obviously, is disorienting and disaffecting, and sometimes people hate it, but it becomes palatable if you are given an uplifting, quantum leap thing to look forward to. “Yes, we’re going to get rid of this scungy thing, but we’ve got some good stuff coming.” But the current plans do not have anything to offer towards those aims. I have to say that I am now a bit behind, regarding which plans I am supposed to be looking at.

THE CHAIR: Let me jump in. This has been a point of confusion. Woolworths put up a proposal for direct sale in March. The planning minister made a statement to parliament, saying that the government did not agree with that direct sale proposal. The minister made a full statement, and we can circulate that afterwards. One of the reasons that the minister gave was that it did not match the government’s strategic priorities because there was no housing involved, and there were some other reasons.

There is not a live, direct-sale specific development proposal at the moment, but the one that you have seen is the one that Woolies has put up. We are now talking about both, because that is what was live when the petition was out there. Also, could you give us any issues you have about the site, or any views you have about how that site should proceed?

Ms Skinner: I group the disadvantages and the possibilities into three. There is a lack of community amenities and facilities in the proposal that we saw. There is an increase in purveying a full-line supermarket, but what is it that they are offering? Is it more high-processed food stuff, in an environment of a diabetes and obesity epidemic? It is not the fresh food stuff; there is a lot of wasteful plastic packaging, a complete lack of any environmental benefits, and no offsets for the waste and destruction that we are about to behold in any demolition.

Going to the last one first, my environmental concerns, there will be significant and polluting destruction and wreckage material created, as well as diesel-powered machinery, and trucking in and out. Where is the amelioration? Where is the reuse or the salvage? What about having a large solar array on the roofs of any of the buildings—maybe a forest of them over the open carpark, on stilts? Where is the community battery or an e-vehicle charger? I hope that we will not be losing any tall canopy trees, because there are some there, and we have lost a lot over all the suburbs. How about some wastewater treatment, or even a wetlands type of use, having regard to the fact that the land is sloping?

My second objection is the products. I could go on about that, but I will endeavour to—

THE CHAIR: We do want to get to Robyn’s opening statement, if she has one.

Ms Skinner: Okay. Can I do the products and packaging, and things that I think would be good to include? I will cut straight to those.

THE CHAIR: Yes, do that.

Ms Skinner: Okay. Presumably, the enlarged premises for a supermarket is to have a quantum leap—more stock to peddle. Despite the population of Hawker, Weetangera, Scullin and Page, we do not show any lack of food. With respect to trans fats and packaging, all Western governments are struggling.

Competition would be great, if we could get some of those fresh food oriented ones, like Supabarn, which is in one of the northern suburbs—Casey—or that guy in the mall who does fresh stuff. What about Trash and Treasure merchants? Could we get them? Don't have somebody who is going to put out those plastic novelty disks and other crap. Smaller produce shops, greengrocers and home produce shops can do the personal service that leads to a better lifestyle.

With respect to packaging, I will not go on about that. With community amenity, it is hard to pick out what went wrong with the Dickson shops redevelopment. There is the prevention of engagement with and access by the more vulnerable members, and we do have a richly embroidered tapestry right here in Hawker. We do not know what has happened to the childcare area. How about a community area for the “buy nothing” crowd, who want to gather somewhere, and the Neighbourhood Watch crowd, who want to gather somewhere?

We do have the community gardens, but they are bleak. They are between the toilet block and a horrible recycling container. It looks as though Hawker Village is designed by sheds, bunkers and “car parks are us”. Certainly, the plans are depressingly the same as anywhere, with blocks sprawled on the landscape; they do not care. It is bleak; it is currently a bit tired and shelter-less. But this is the national capital.

THE CHAIR: Katy, I am sorry. I might—

Ms Skinner: Okay; cut me off. We can do much better.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will have a brief opening statement from Robyn; then we will go to the first question from the panel.

Ms Coghlan: I support most of what has just been said. I have a very brief statement.

THE CHAIR: Please go ahead.

Ms Coghlan: I consider that the Woolworths proposal for Hawker will completely disrupt the shopping centre for several years, if it goes ahead. It will leave us without a supermarket while the site is excavated and rebuilt. This is the only good-size metro supermarket in the district, and it is helpful for older or handicapped people because of the current ease of access.

Some people might welcome a full-line supermarket, but these are currently adequately available within a few kilometres. Those who cannot cope with a larger supermarket because of mobility problems will be left in the lurch, if the current metro is replaced by a full-line supermarket. In addition, pedestrian access from the basement parking appears to have only one exit point. This will mean that those with

mobility problems will have to walk from their car to the elevator, possibly some distance away.

The current proposal will destroy the existing public space around Rocksalt, which is the main coffee shop, and it will inevitably shift the focus away from the existing buildings that are not owned by Woolworths. Further, it will most likely cause problems in the small cul-de-sac, where the access to and from basement parking will increase traffic and associated noise close to the existing apartment block.

The proposal will also adversely affect the Belconnen Way Hotel site. In particular, it is not clear how the excavation of the proposed site will be implemented along the edge of the hotel site. The slope of the land meant that the hotel excavated its border with the road surrounding the car park when it was constructed decades ago. This edge slopes slightly and it is covered by trees and shrubs. These will presumably all be lost. Will they be replaced by a brick wall surrounding the basement parking?

The southern edge of the hotel building is currently separated from the supermarket building by a steep space that is paved but not suitable for traffic. How will this space be treated? Will part of it be included in the basement? At the top of it there is an electrical service box that will presumably continue to be on government-owned land. Will it be accessed via a steep walk up the slope, once the current road is demolished? The government needs to consider these facts before determining the land to be sold.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Robyn. I thank you all for your opening statements. We have 20 minutes, and we will do the best we can to make sure we cover questions. If there is something we do not get to that you want to tell us, please talk to our secretariat afterwards and we can make sure that we get those views.

MS CARRICK: My question is about densification. The government has a densification agenda. There is a housing crisis and affordability crisis. What is your view about the ACT government's role in planning the precinct and in planning the housing—whether it be shop-top housing or just planning in general—where the shops are in the commercial areas, public spaces and the community facilities to ensure that the precinct is holistically planned into the future?

Ms Hill: I agree: shop-top, yes and apartment block, yes, provided they have some environmental benefits—and are not just the horrible things that we have seen come up all of over Wright and places.

Ms Gingell: As I have said, I am totally against the shop-top housing, for various reasons. Also, I would think that perhaps apartments could be built where the horrible Hawker apartments are currently located. They are old and they are very scungy. I cannot imagine that they give a very high level of residential amenity. So, if we need more housing around the shops, especially if it is apartment blocks, that perhaps could be considered.

MS CARRICK: What about the ACT government's role in planning all of this? Or, because the shops are owned by the private sector, should it be done by the private sector as they see opportunities—

Ms Gingell: No; if it involves the sale of public land, the first step should be consultation. As I have said, I am very much in favour of keeping that large carpark, for various reasons. If we have to give up, why does it have to be for a large entity like Woolworths? Why does it have to be a large full-line supermarket, which we have many of in inner Belconnen? There is a community centre at the Denman Prospect shops. We do not have anything like that.

Ms Skinner: I think that the government ought to take a role in this because all of the private sector have the profit motive and there is no altruism or respect for the community in any of their work.

THE CHAIR: Victoria?

Ms Hill: I think we have to seriously consider the value of that land for future generations of our society. It is not just about us now; it is about what that land can be used for in the many generations—because, once it is gone and sold, perhaps to a company like Woolworths, that space is gone forever and all the potential that it might have is gone, as a massive, huge supermarket.

Can the whole approach be considered within the shop footprint? Can housing be put within the shop footprint above a redone Woolworths? Is that a possibility? It is quite a large space that Woolworths owns, and there is a lot of potential for that site to be developed in a really creative—not smash-it-all-down—way.

THE CHAIR: Robyn?

Ms Coghlan: I am not too sure what to say after all that.

THE CHAIR: You do not have to; I just wanted to make sure you had the chance.

Ms Coghlan: I am not supportive of shop-top housing in that there area, because it will completely upset the access to the supermarket that we currently have, which works really well for those people who have walking issues of some kind. I think we need to recognise that fact. While a full-line supermarket will help a lot of people, we also need to make sure that we have the services or infrastructure necessary to support those people who cannot cope with that sort of extensive walk when they are trying to do their shopping. That is important.

Ms Gingell: Having lost those smaller supermarkets from the suburbs around, I think it is important. I believe that Metro is an appropriate size. It could be a bit bigger. They could move the alcohol out and put it in the building where the TAB was. That would give them increased space if they wanted to carry more goods. But I think it is important to note that not everybody wants to walk a million miles just to pick up their milk and bread and a few other groceries, and the Metro provides a space where you do not have to walk a mile.

Ms Hill: If you stand there and watch, at all times of the day, many elderly people from the whole region, not just the surrounding suburbs, shop there because they can.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We might move onto Caitlin's question.

MS TOUGH: Thank you, Chair. Everyone has talked about there needing to be some form of renewal for the site, whether that is Woolworths initiated or government initiated—some kind of renewal. I am interested in what particular community amenities you would like to see in that renewal, how parking and, for example, toilets and community spaces would fit into that renewal. What kinds of things would you like to see in a renewed site?

Ms Gingell: With regard to the toilets—which has already been mentioned—yesterday I visited the Wright Metro. I believe at one stage, Woolworths said they would incorporate the public toilets into their redevelopment. They did that at Curtin. They are absolutely disgusting. It is one door for everybody and then two toilet spaces inside. They were filthy and disgusting and very difficult to actually find.

At Wright, I was looking around for the public toilets and I could not see any signage at all. But, as we were leaving and walked around, there was something the size of a front door with the usual signs of “Men”, “Women” and “Handicapped”, but it did not even open for me. So I think, yes, toilets are important, especially for older people.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Skinner: I think it is an excellent place for a childcare centre—not smack in the middle like the Weetangera one, but that has died a death too, thank goodness.

THE CHAIR: I was going to say that that DA has been knocked back.

Ms Skinner: Yes, thank goodness. A community benefit op-shop space, where we could possibly have a repair café; a community room to base Neighbourhood Watch and an aged or youth club; indoor play—

Ms Gingell: They are great ideas, but those sorts of businesses or community facilities do not pay the sort of rents that Woolworths would want—

Ms Skinner: Tell us about it.

Ms Gingell: So I do not think that is a goer at all.

Ms Skinner: Nevertheless, if you are asked what community services you would like, these are the things. It is a wish list. Maybe you would not get any, but I think that a government plan should have space for those kinds of amenities, including a government community services personnel spot, office space for Centrelink, for example—all of those.

Ms Gingell: Maybe you could have something like the Hughes Community Centre. I visited that a few times for U3A, and I think they offer quite a lot of opportunities—probably for those community kinds of things that you have mentioned. But Woolworths are not going to want to build a community centre. That is why the whole thing has to be changed around to what the community wants and needs and what is feasible. Does it have to involve the sale of land? If it does, well it should be done so with community support.

Ms Coghlan: Not only that; the government needs to pay more attention to land that is just not being used.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Coghlan: In relation to the comment about the childcare centre, the former tennis courts in Hawker have been unattended since 2015. They have lodged two applications to build a childcare centre on the site, which is now completely demolished, and nothing has happened. There is lots of potential there. The government needs to smarten up on paying attention to sites that are basically abandoned while the owners wait for some hopeful improvement to benefit from.

Ms Gingell: Pot of gold.

Ms Coghlan: I do not understand why the government is so relaxed in relation to why a property is sitting vacant.

MS TOUGH: Thank you.

MR CAIN: The minister for planning answered questions from me last term. I questioned the government's approach to consultation on this whole development, and he indicated that consultation had been undertaken—referring to the Woolworths consultation. The committee has made a decision to do community consultation. What form of consultation do you think the government needs to undertake to find out what the wishes of the local community are?

Ms Gingell: It could conduct surveys, which seems to be the flavour of the month, rather than face to face. I think face-to-face engagement by the government would be of value. We would need to have the feeling that they are sincere about listening to us, because that does not seem to have happened in the current scenario. Despite the government saying several times—this was discovered in FOI documents—that they should engage more with the community, their engagement is sadly lacking.

I do not know anybody that knew anything about engagement at the shops, unless you happened to be walking by. I did attend the evening at the Hawker College. Again, with respect to the time at which it was held, a lot of people would not have been available to attend. I do not think they even had 100 people there—somebody might know—which is not very representative of all the people that shop at Hawker shops.

Ms Hill: It certainly was not appropriate for Woolworths to be writing, in the consultation, that they wanted to buy through direct sale. It needs to be managed by the government and not by a company with vested interests. A number of community members were outside the drop-in session run by Woolworths. Questions were asked of the representative, and he refused to give any answers. One young mother who shops there regularly, because it works for her, said, "Is it going to be two storeys?" The representative said, "Anything is possible."

I then said, "This is a great space; what could you do within the shop footprint?" He

said, “We’re not doing anything here until we know we’ve got the direct sale of the land—the whole space.” He also said that there would be a full-line shopping centre. I said, “Is that like the mall?” He said, “No, bigger.” Those were the kinds of responses that the community, who were asking genuine questions, and who were not shown any ideas about what they were going to do, were meant to be commenting on, in the consultation, but we were not given any facts. It was not appropriate.

Ms Gingell: Other questions were put through the communication link, and the response was, “You’ll have to wait for the DA.” Things are not being done in the correct order, either. They did not even put up any signage. If you were genuinely wanting to consult the community, you would have had two or three signage things at Hawker shops. Was it you, Jo, that spoke to them?

THE CHAIR: Yes. I asked them—

Ms Gingell: We finally got something. When I was outside the shops and talking to people, for most people, it was not like it was fully in their face. I would then have to walk over with them and say, “This is what is being proposed. What do you think about that? It involves these changes.”

Ms Hill: I know four people—my generation—who shop there all the time, from Page and Weetangera. They knew nothing about it. I told them, “This is what’s happening.” They knew nothing; absolutely nothing. It was in the middle of winter.

MR CAIN: Katy and Robyn, do you have any thoughts on what would be adequate consultation, from your point of view, to find out what the community wants?

Ms Coghlan: It was very minimal. Our efforts to try and alert the community did not succeed at all. At the time of the consultation, there was not much information to engage the attention of a lot of people.

Ms Skinner: Perhaps we have to get into social media.

Ms Coghlan: It was not until after consultation that the actual plans—

Ms Skinner: Now we are saying: what would we like to see? I reckon social media is a way of reaching people, even kids in garages.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for raising all of these issues. It is fascinating to see how many different witnesses are raising similar issues. I have lodged a question with the minister about that tennis site. There is a new power in the act that allows government to take enforcement action after 12 months of unoccupied lease. That is the one that has been used at Richardson shops. We will see whether that leads to anything.

We had a lot of submissions that talked about the importance of easy shopping spaces in the area for older people, and people with disability and neurodiversity—people who are maybe picking a smaller shop or an easier shop that is a bit less overwhelming. When we see the minister next week, are there any organisations—

Council on the Ageing or Advocacy for Inclusion—or particular people that we might suggest should be consulted to make sure that, if a redesign happens there, parking and access to facilities do not get accidentally cut out for a bunch of vulnerable people who have specifically chosen to access this space? Would COTA and Advocacy for Inclusion be good organisations who could say, “If you do it, here’s how you do it”?

Ms Gingell: They could certainly be asked.

Ms Skinner: I am trying to think of one in the disability area. I worked in a disability support centre for younger ones.

THE CHAIR: Maybe it is just about making sure somebody has intentionally engaged with people in those cohorts, to make sure that it is done well.

Ms Skinner: The care of those people has been outsourced to Sunnyfield, Hartley and all those places, so it would be hard to draw upon that sector.

THE CHAIR: We are at the end of our time. As I said, if there are things that were not covered in what you told us today, or in your submissions—we have those submissions; we received 70 submissions, and we have read them—please chat to James and Justice, and we will make sure that we get those views.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank our witnesses who have assisted us today. Thank you for coming, and I want to thank the people who came along to watch. I want to offer a little apology, on behalf of the committee. We have had a number of comments about how we labelled people. We will take those on board because I think labelling people on public documents is something about which we should take care. I am sorry for any offence that we have caused in that regard. We will make sure that we do better next time.

I want to thank broadcasting and Hansard for their support. It is quite hard in different facilities, and they have done a good job. I want to thank Hawker College for hosting us here today. It was very kind.

If any members want to ask questions on notice, please upload them to the portal as soon as possible. We are now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 12.40 pm.