

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

(Reference: draft variation to the Territory Plan No 189)

Members:

**MRS V DUNNE (The Chair)
MS K GALLAGHER
MS R DUNDAS**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 21 JUNE 2002

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms M Weeks (Ph: 62050199)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

The committee met at 9.35 am.

THE CHAIR: I call these public hearings of the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment to order. Today we are hearing evidence from a number of organisations relating to the committee's inquiry into draft variation 189 relating to the commercial B2A Civic Centre land use policy. Today's proceedings are being reticulated throughout the Assembly building and will be broadcast to government offices. There has been no media interest in broadcasting the proceedings or any part of the proceedings.

PETER CONWAY was called.

THE CHAIR: I welcome the representative of the Canberra Property Owners Association. I remind the witness that for the record you will need to state your name and position held within the organisation. I would also remind the witness that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say to us today. It also means that you have the responsibility to tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. I also remind the witness that his comments should relate to the committee's consideration of draft variation 189 and not to any other matter, even if it is currently under the committee's consideration.

Before I invite you to address the committee, I would like to establish the status of the submission provided by Tony Adams of McCann and Associates, which purports to be on behalf of the Canberra Property Owners Association. Could you please indicate to the committee that this submission does represent the views of the Canberra Property Owners Association and that your organisation would like the committee to receive it as a submission?

Mr Conway: That is correct, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: That is correct. Could you give your name and position.

Mr Conway: Peter Conway, Executive Director, Canberra Property Owners Association. The gentleman behind me is Nick McDonald Crowley from McCanns, who is here for any technical advice you may require.

THE CHAIR: Mr Conway, would you like to give a presentation.

Mr Conway: Can I start off by saying that the association is not opposed to the suggested redevelopment of section 56. I think we would all agree that for the Civic Centre to go ahead there does need to be a revitalisation of the area. The association doesn't wish to dwell on past decisions of previous governments. The decisions have been made regarding the preferred tender.

We do have some issues regarding the timing and how long it has taken for Queensland Investment Corporation to proceed with that part of their development. Members of the association have had to deal with the Queensland Investment Corporation during a rather

difficult period with the upgrade of the Canberra Centre. Members of the association directly concerned are worried that with further delays, without a specific starting time or announcement, a central area of Canberra will become a major land bank for an outside organisation.

Our specific concerns relate to 189, and that is to do, in a nutshell, with the number of car spaces being provided. We believe that there are insufficient in the proposed PA in the order of 100 to 200, not only during the construction stage but also at the final completion.

We also believe the PA does not properly address car overflow areas along Lonsdale Street, which is proposed to come, as you know, right along Lonsdale from Haig Park right into Civic. We are concerned that there is no mention of traffic calming or what associated methods of traffic control will be placed there; and, in particular, the overflow of traffic into the flats and the heritage area and Reid.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, the overflow into?

Mr Conway: Into the flats and the heritage area and the Reid area.

As I said, another major concern has been the time that this has taken to come to fruition. It is some 3½ years, if my memory serves me right, since the preferred tender was announced. We are just hopeful the thing will proceed, subject to our major concerns about parking and traffic issues.

I might just note, Madam Chair, that we are also seeking a meeting with the Queensland Premier, as a director of the Queensland Investment Corporation, to discuss our concerns with him about what we perceive is an unnecessary delay in the project proceeding.

THE CHAIR: Do you see that there are particular delays that lie more with the proponent than with the government? Do you have a feel for where the delays lie, or are you just concerned about the overall delay?

Mr Conway: Just concerned at the overall delay. There doesn't seem to be yet a set target. As I said, 3½ years have elapsed and it would have been nice if the Canberra Centre had been proceeded with a lot earlier. I knew there were some issues there in land grants. It just seems that the whole process is taking quite a long time. A couple of our members have been financially disadvantaged and they are in litigation at the moment, but that is for another place. We would hope to see the project move but please take note of our major concerns about parking.

MS DUNDAS: On the timing issue: how would you see that progress could have happened more quickly? Where do you think the time issues have been? At which stages?

Mr Conway: I think, Ms Dundas, the issue is one of the Queensland Investment Corporation being a major superannuation fund. Section 56 would be one of many on their books as a super fund and I can only presume that it fits in with their big picture rather than what we perhaps would like in the middle of Canberra.

MS GALLAGHER: But, Peter, what could they have done to get it going? What could have been done in terms of this project without the final planning approval, et cetera?

Mr Conway: Well, we are drifting a little from 189, but I think what should happen in government land deals—and, as I said, we don't wish to dwell on the past—is if government is going to put out blocks of land like this for auction or sale or tender, then the executive or PALM should have the planning regime measurements in place. I don't think it is fair on proponents and then hence to next door neighbours of members of the association I am involved with that get caught up in lengthy, costly variations and having to deal with the Assembly on an ongoing basis.

THE CHAIR: Mr Conway, from what you are saying, that means that that is a responsibility that falls to government and not to the proponent.

Mr Conway: In this case, yes. In a general sense I am saying it would be nice if that happened.

THE CHAIR: Yes. On the car parking, which seems to be the substantive issue that you have raised here, the gravamen of what you are saying is that the current section 56 car parking is car parking for most of Civic. It is centrally located and it addresses that great quadrant of commercial buildings. By your calculations, how many car spaces would be needed for (a) the car parking in Civic and (b) the development that is going to go on that spot, and therefore how much do you see that that has fallen short?

Mr Conway: McCann and Associates did a guesstimate between 100 and 200 additional spots.

THE CHAIR: Have you done some sort of analysis of how much is needed for Civic and then plus the development?

Mr Conway: Analysis—can I just check. No. It is internal workings by McCann and Associates while doing some plot ratio work. That is their feeling.

THE CHAIR: Okay. So that is their feeling. Do you think, Mr Conway, that you could provide the committee with a more detailed breakdown of what you think the car parking should be?

Mr Conway: Yes, certainly.

THE CHAIR: Do the members have any other questions?

MS DUNDAS: No.

MS GALLAGHER: No.

THE CHAIR: Do you have anything more to say, Mr Conway?

Mr Conway: No. I just hope that your deliberations are swift and that you can get into the Assembly and have a vote as quickly as possible.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Mr Conway: I wish you well in your deliberations.

THE CHAIR: Thanks a lot.

JAMES MacGREGOR DICKINS was called.

THE CHAIR: I welcome the representative from the North Canberra Community Council. I remind the witness that for the record you will need to state your name and position held within the organisation when you first give evidence to the committee. I would also remind the witness that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say to us today. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell us the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

I also remind the witness that his comments should relate to the committee's consideration of draft variation 189 and not to any other matter, even if it is currently under the committee's consideration. As is the practice, I invite you to make any statement relevant to this committee's terms of reference. We will then move to questions. Dr Dickins, would you like to give a presentation.

Dr Dickins: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am James MacGregor Dickins. I am here actually representing two groups. I am here representing the North Canberra Community Council—

THE CHAIR: Dr Dickins, you were actually put on the list as representing the North Canberra Community Council, so I will have to ask you to stick to wearing that hat. I am sorry, but any other views you may have as a member of another organisation—

Dr Dickins : In my letter, which I addressed, I did say that—

THE CHAIR: If another organisation wants to be heard, Dr Dickins, we would have to make a separate arrangement. The way the standing orders stand, you would have to give separate evidence. There may have been a misunderstanding, but at this stage we are hearing from a representative of the North Canberra Community Council.

Dr Dickins : Can I read what I said in the letter?

THE CHAIR: It says, “On behalf of the North Canberra Community Council Inc”.

Dr Dickins : I did say the Inner Canberra LAPAC, of which I am chair, also has concerns about the various variations, which at the same time I could address.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, Dr Dickins. You wrote to us as the North Canberra Community Council and we will have to confine it to that.

Dr Dickins : Well, it covers the same ground.

THE CHAIR: That may be the case, but we are not hearing from the North Canberra LAPAC.

Dr Dickins : It does cover the same ground. As I read out, I am the convenor/chair of the Inner North LAPAC. I am here, as I said, representing the North Canberra Community Council, of which I am a member. I would like to apologise for Joan Kellett, who is the chair. We are all, I think, suffering from overload, and she apologises because of other heavy commitments.

The first matter I would like to address is the question of process. We would hope that the committee would take that on board, because we feel that the suitable way to deal with a planning measure like this is, instead of at a late stage having a draft variation, the first stage of such a process would be that we would do the planning issues before there was any contract issued into with government and another party about this variation. We are not quite sure at this stage what this would mean in terms of legality and in terms of perhaps costs and so on. This has happened in other places—for instance, in the Deakin oval also the draft variation and the effect of the draft variation is limited because of a prior contract entered into by the government with the developers. So we would hope that the committee might take this on board and give their attention to this kind of problem. So that is the first point that we would like to make.

Coming back to the question of what is in the development: there are two main questions which we want to address, and that is how the development affects adjacent areas and Civic Centre, and the development itself. Our attitude to the development is that it should go back to taws and that the main value of the development would be for community use, developing the area as an area of public land. I know some people would question the use of public land. We would have liked to have seen its use first for increasing the development of the community facilities that are at present connected with the Griffin Centre. We would have liked to have seen it developed for housing. For example, there has been a lot of talk about urban village, and it would have seemed to have been very appropriate to consider this in terms of an urban village development.

We would like to say about its commercial uses that, firstly, there is an over sufficiency of shopping already. Wherever one looks in Canberra, and in various parts of Civic, there are vacant shops, and we would not see it useful and in the short- and long-term economically viable for the city for there to be further shopping. Also, in relation to theatres, we wouldn't see any need for further theatres at this stage.

We would contend that there is an over-development of tourist accommodation. The overall bed rate for Canberra varies to somewhere about 60 per cent over the whole year. We feel that it is not a good way to use our resources to develop further hotel/motel accommodation and at the same time be pulling down other similar accommodation such as the proposal to pull down the Canberra Rex—these are current proposals; the DAs are already in—and also Kythera. So basically we are saying that the development from a planning point of view should go back to taws.

I would like to say a little more about the question of the Griffin Centre. I presume that you will have evidence from the people concerned, but we would see that the proposal for community organisations is minimal and we would want to see a greater part of the development put to community facilities. We would also like to see the community facilities in the centre put in a central position, especially in relation to Garema Place. As we have said in our written submission, Civic Centre is a centre without a centre. We would like to see the community facilities put in a more central position, and related to

Garema Place, to enhance that whole area and to give some emphasis to that. We would like consideration given to this. This involves other matters related to Civic but we would see Garema Place as the main public centre in Civic.

We don't see the penitentiary-type exercise yard outside here, if I could put it that way, as being very central in its geographical position. We wouldn't see that as the best place to become a centre now, but that is a matter for further discussion. We would not necessarily have an absolutely firm feeling about that, but we feel that the community facilities should have a central role and that should be associated with the development of Garema Place and that area as an important cultural and civic centre.

The other point we wanted to make is about affordable housing—the type of housing. We would see it important to increase the amount of residential housing in Civic. There is a problem now because it is not very attractive. It is pretty clear from the market—heaven forbid we should support the market—that people are not finding Civic very attractive, and that is partly because it is noisy, because it is not very safe. We would see that it is very important that there be more open space, that there be more treed space, so that housing in this area could be made very much more attractive.

There is quite a critical situation in relation to affordable housing. We would have seen it as a government area—as I said before, a public area. It would have been more appropriate to take more effective action which would result in more affordable housing. The type of housing that is planned is just the same as other types of housing in the inner north and around the city area. But we just haven't seen the development of affordable housing.

I think that comes pretty much to the end of what I wanted to say.

THE CHAIR: On the question of housing, Dr Dickins, you said that Civic wasn't attractive. I just wanted to clarify what you meant by that. Do you mean that there isn't a demand for housing in Civic, or that there is something about the nature of Civic that means that people don't like to live there? I am just trying to establish what the North Canberra Community Council thinks of this.

Dr Dickins: Well shall we put it this way: it would be desirable for it to be more attractive.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, in what sense attractive—that Civic needs to be beautified or that it isn't a desirable place to live?

Dr Dickins: No, we wouldn't say it is not a desirable place, but it needs to be made more attractive.

THE CHAIR: And what elements would you see need to be—

Dr Dickins: Well, I think, first of all, we really want to ensure there is more open space and that we develop the city with more open space than what is happening at present. The noise is partly because it is all pavement. There needs to be open space with trees and such like. The plan proposal for the area that we are talking about has virtually no

open space. It has got very little open space. We would see that in this development there should be more—and when I say “open space”, I mean unpaved open space.

THE CHAIR: That is one of my little hobby horses. I have a particular hobby horse about hard spaces and the effect that it has on ground water and stormwater and things like that. But, also, do you see large areas of treed open space having a negative effect in terms of criminal activity? Treed areas probably mean that you can't oversee. It is a trade-off—we don't want to cut down our trees so you can expose the vandals.

Dr Dickins: I am not a surveillance person. If you ask me a question about safety, the most important thing would be to have a full employment policy, which we don't have and which is another matter altogether. I know it is not directly related but if you are looking out the window you can't tell the difference between a burglar and a non-burglar. So the nub of the question isn't surveillance as such. There is a whole complex of questions. If someone is peddling drugs, you can see that, but I doubt whether the trees are going to affect whether you can see that.

MS DUNDAS: What would the North Canberra Community Council ideally want to see happening to that area of space that we are talking about? What is the best-dream scenario? What would you like to see happen to the Griffin Centre and the car park?

Dr Dickins: Best-dream scenario—that is not easy to answer just off the cuff.

MS GALLAGHER: Other than go back to the terms of reference—other than what you have said in terms of going back to the beginning.

Dr Dickins: To answer your question properly I would have to think about the whole area. You might, for example, say it should be a Kate Carnell memorial park but—

THE CHAIR: But she is not dead.

Dr Dickins: But, to answer the question, I would have to think a bit more.

MS DUNDAS: Are you opposed to redevelopment of the site? Would you like the site to stay as it is? Do you think it should be kept as urban open space, notwithstanding the definition in the Territory Plan, be that a car park or a grassland? Do you see it as an area right for redevelopment, be that an urban village or the plan that is before us?

Dr Dickins: To some extent, I would have to give you a personal opinion. I think there would be an argument for keeping it as open space for future development. There has developed already quite a problem from a strategic plan point of view that there are going to be demands for space in the future and we haven't been putting aside sufficient ground which could then be allocated as need arises. The North Canberra Community Council, and residents' groups as a whole, consider that Civic shouldn't be developed as a central business district but it should be just a special centre associated with the dispersal of employment centres. We would think that Civic should be primarily a civic and cultural centre, not a business centre—not a business centre more than any of the other centres. Does that answer the question a bit?

MS DUNDAS: It does a bit, but the follow-on question is: you talk about setting the land aside for future demand. Does that mean that you do not believe that there is sufficient demand at this point in time to redevelop the site?

Dr Dickins : Yes. I could answer yes to that question.

MS GALLAGHER: Although some people who are currently residing in the Griffin Centre might think differently, Mac.

Dr Dickins : Well that would be right. We wouldn't be opposed to the further development of community facilities.

MS DUNDAS: The Griffin Centre. But in terms of residential and—

Dr Dickins : We certainly don't see any need for it from a commercial point of view and there are other options for residential development which we would give precedence to, I think. There are other possibilities of encouraging residential development. So it would only be the community facilities that we would think would be worthy of having further development.

THE CHAIR: Dr Dickins, are you the chair of the North Canberra LAPAC?

Dr Dickins : I am the convenor of the inner-north.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps the Inner North Canberra LAPAC might write to us with their views, if you feel that they need to be—

Dr Dickins : You mean especially?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Dr Dickins : Okay, we would be happy to because our motion concerned the community facilities.

THE CHAIR: Yes, okay. In that case, perhaps the LAPAC might like to write to us, so that we can make sure we cover the whole range. As there are no further questions, thank you, Dr Dickins.

SANDY SANTMYERS,

GEORGE HERON and

GRAEME WHELLER EVANS

were called.

THE CHAIR: Would the representatives of the ACT Council of Cultural and Community Organisations Inc. please come forward. I remind the witnesses that, for the record, you will need to state your name and position held within the organisation when you first give evidence to the committee.

I would also remind the witnesses that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. This gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say to us today, but it also means that you have a responsibility to tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

I also remind witnesses that their comments should relate to the committee's deliberation on draft variation 189 and not to any other matter, even if it is currently under the committee's consideration. As is practice, I invite you to make any particular statement you would like at the beginning of the hearing before we move to questions. Who would like to open the batting?

Dr Santmyers: I will, Madam Chair. My name is Sandy Santmyers, I'm the President of the CCCO. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee and express some of our concerns and respond to any questions that the committee might have about the issues that have been raised in the past several months in regard to the new Griffin Centre, the development of section 56, now section 84. Our concerns, in broad terms, are that the proposed facility, which is certainly a step in the right direction in terms of correcting the provision for service and community organisations' accommodation, doesn't quite go far enough and that the nature of the plan, as it stands—the footprint, the floor space and the location—is inconsistent with the things that we've indicated several times in the past couple of years are necessary to adequately provide for community service accommodation in Civic.

In particular, we are concerned about the fact that the nature of the proposed building, as it stands, does not allow for growth in the community sector, and that it does not adequately allow for provision of the multicultural agencies which are currently tenants of the Griffin Centre, and any that might want to become part of the Griffin Centre facilities.

Some of the difficulties that we'd like to bring up in relation to surveys and studies—these things have been mentioned in previous submissions to PALM and to the current government and to the past government—are issues about growth in the area and issues about the philosophical concept of multiculturalism being separated from cultural and community organisations; that they're being treated as two entities, as opposed to

sticking to what we believe is the current government's policy, and certainly is the policy of most of the multicultural agencies that are housed in the Griffin Centre, that they don't see themselves as separate from the mainstream but want to be integrated with the mainstream. There therefore needs to be provision for them to be adequately housed in the new Griffin Centre, assuming that that's going to go ahead as planned.

Those issues—again, the integration of the multicultural concept, the footprint, the actual floor space and the location—are the main issues, and we're quite prepared to respond to any particular questions that you have about it.

THE CHAIR: You've raised the footprint, the floor space and the actual location. Do you want to actually expand briefly on those issues?

Dr Santmyers: Sure. Our concern about the footprint is that it doesn't allow for growth, that it doesn't provide adequate ground floor space for agencies which have enjoyed ground floor space in the current Griffin Centre, that it doesn't anticipate need. It rather maybe just barely provides for some of the current need. But we have several agencies—like, for instance, CIRSACT—which need to be on the ground floor and immediately accessible to walking.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, CIRSACT?

Dr Santmyers: Community information referral. They need to be easily accessible; they can't be away. They've got to be ground floor, street front visibility, in order for people to access the service that they provide. That's one of many.

Other issues that have to do with the footprint—in that it's considerably smaller and high-rise, as opposed to long and just a two-storey building—are the issues of the diversity of accommodation and the fact that some people will be forcibly exposed to other services, like CAHMA needle exchange—a mother with a pram going to see someone at the MRC. It's all kind of crammed together rather than spread out so that they can have some degree of privacy and lack of falling on top of each other. The footprint is forcing that issue, where everyone would have to access it.

THE CHAIR: So how big is the footprint?

Dr Santmyers: The footprint is approximately 20 or 25 per cent of what the current footprint is.

THE CHAIR: No, sorry, how big is the footprint?

Dr Santmyers: How big is the footprint? May I refer to one of you gentlemen for the actual figure—900 something?

THE CHAIR: Name yourself, please.

Mr Heron: My name is George Heron, I am the Executive Officer of the ACT Council of Cultural and Community Organisations Inc., currently holding that job in an honorary capacity. May I ask, Madam Chair, is the question directed at the existing centre or the planned centre as represented in draft variation 189?

THE CHAIR: The planned new centre—what we're currently working on on the plans.

Mr Heron: Approximately 950 square metres is what's set forth in the planning documentation at the moment.

MS DUNDAS: Which planning document are you referring to?

Mr Heron: Originally the preliminary assessment, which put forward a site that was of that size, approximately 950 square metres, but to accommodate both the youth centre and the Griffin Centre. As a result of the submissions and the evaluation of those submissions, there was a change which relocated, in a planning sense, the youth centre, and left 950 square metres or thereabouts for the Griffin Centre alone. That same figure, I believe, was represented again in the first copy of draft variation 189, and I understand no change has been made to that component.

THE CHAIR: So a 950-square-metre footprint, four storeys? Is that right?

Dr Santmyers: Conceivably, yes.

Mr Heron: To meet the total space that's also set forth in the planning documents would require four storeys, so the mathematical conversion says yes, it would have to be four storeys.

Dr Santmyers: As to location: the original brief suggested that the location would be with a Bunda Street frontage, which we felt was desirable. That's been altered, obviously, from the sketch that exists now. The location is at the corner of what will be the then opened Lonsdale Street and the lane on the north side of the parking lot, the lane that runs between the current Griffin Centre and Target—it's not got street signs, but it'll be on that corner.

The nature of it is inconsistent with what we had hoped would be a highly visible to the retail section shopfront kind of thing. Although it hasn't been clearly established where the entrance will be—whether it would be on the lane or whether it would actually be on Lonsdale Street—its location is effectively out of sight and, unfortunately, out of mind. It simply will not have the visibility that the Griffin Centre has. The location is detrimental to the function of the Griffin Centre, which is to be clearly visible and accessible.

As to floor space: the floor space has been calculated on both current use and what the current users—tenants and multi-purpose room users—indicated they would like to have. However, the process of assessing that was faulty in that the people who were asked to provide information on the plan in response to the proposal weren't aware of how the system works. They're community organisations, some of them are fairly small, they don't have five-year plans, 10-year plans—it's difficult for them to get their head around the concept of looking to the future.

They got no help from any of the consultants who might be available, or a minimum amount of help from our office in that at the time of the original survey our office was not equipped to provide that help. So these people said, "Oh, it'd be nice to be a little bit bigger," and they made a guesstimate of 10 per cent or whatever. But they didn't

anticipate future needs adequately, and that's in part their responsibility. But again we're talking about community organisations who simply don't know how to extrapolate future needs. In many cases they have already proved inadequate in their guesstimate from 18 months or two years ago. So the reality of expectations for accommodation floor space is already out of date.

MS GALLAGHER: Sandy, you are here as an organisation that represents current tenants of the Griffin Centre?

Dr Santmyers: No.

MS GALLAGHER: Are you speaking on behalf of them?

Dr Santmyers: Yes. We're here not just as that, not just tenants but also our users, and that includes the people who use the multi-purpose rooms, and there are some couple of hundred of them each year. We've got 28 tenants, regular in-house residents, and some 200 organisations that use the centre, and several who have asked for accommodation in the future building. So we represent all of them.

MS GALLAGHER: So it's their view that, when they were filling out the survey about floor space requirements and made those decisions, they weren't informed, but now they're kind of regretting what they put forward?

Dr Santmyers: Okay, that's the truth in some cases, and it's an assumption from our perception of their realities in others.

MS GALLAGHER: "Our"—your?

Dr Santmyers: Our board—the board of the Council of Community and Cultural Organisations.

MS GALLAGHER: And if they had their time over again, in your view, what is the figure—not 950, presumably?

Dr Santmyers: Well, that's 950 simply for the ground floor. That's the footprint; it's sort of times four. If they were adequately briefed and provided with some kind of consultant or agent to help them extrapolate, I would suggest that—I'd have to check with my colleagues—in a five-year program they're 25 per cent under.

Mr Evans: Or more.

Dr Santmyers: Or possibly even more. You need to identify yourself, Graeme, if you're going to talk.

THE CHAIR: Can Graeme identify himself for Hansard?

Mr Evans: Yes. Graeme Evans, I'm the immediate past president of the ACT Council of Cultural and Community Organisations and, as immediate past president, a current member of the board.

THE CHAIR: When you say “or more”, on what basis are you saying 25 per cent or more?

Mr Evans: I’ve been in a position to observe these things over a number of years, and certainly one of the problems we continually had was that the community organisations that are there were all terribly busy and the reality, the immediacy of the need to divert attention from other things and focus on this, and the need to think through a real planning process for their needs five years or 10 years ahead, it just didn’t happen. It was the squeaky wheel that continually got their attention. They would have needed assistance, undoubtedly, in engaging in a planning exercise. That’s not what they’ve come together as an organisation for.

That lack of expertise and experience in engaging in projects of that nature was reinforced for much of the time by a belief that it probably wouldn’t happen anyway. It was all so distant, so remote; it wasn’t an immediate priority by any means.

The other thing is that there was never a process of properly identifying what organisations were not located in the Griffin Centre that could mount proper arguments for being there, and ought to be there—territory-wide organisations that should be in what Planning and Land Management tells us is the pre-eminent centre of the city of Canberra as a whole. The organisations that were not there missed out very badly in that process.

MS DUNDAS: Can I ask you to explain to us what consultation you have been involved in, either through ACT government or with people putting in applications. How do you feel that the Griffin Centre and the ACT community organisations have been asked to contribute to—besides the survey—the design, or to the needs analysis?

Dr Santmyers: Okay. We need to do it a bit chronologically, if we can, Ms Dundas. The original plan was offered to the Griffin Centre management to respond to, which was done, and those documents are on the files. I guess the preliminary assessment was the first one. Is that correct, George, or was that the second one?

Mr Heron: I think the consultation process goes back a long way before that. My colleague Graeme would have more of the historic background to that. From the time I came into it there was quite a bit of consultation with the council, which represents not only the tenants and users but also our member organisations—and those fluctuate in number according to comings and goings, but normally around 65 to 70.

There has been consultation with them in an effort to try to put some sort of quantity on judgments that had previously been put forward regarding the need for more ground floor space and more total space than was on offer in the then planning documents.

Then came the preliminary assessment, and we had limited consultation. I say “limited” because we advised all of our clients, as it were, that the document was available for them to view and make comment on, but in fact we actually got very little back. We then went forward with our submission on the PA based upon the results of the survey we had previously carried out and based upon the sorts of views that had come out of a number of public meetings that had been held in the past months.

Dr Santmyers : That would have been June 2001.

MS DUNDAS: Can I ask a question back from June 2001? In the request for tender and expressions of interest that went out to builders/developers, there was a requirement for the community space. That was something put in by the ACT government—you have to do this. Were you consulted by the ACT government on the information they put out to the tenderers for what was required for community space? Did the government consult you about what was needed?

Mr Heron: This relates to the functional brief, I think, which you had more background involvement in.

Dr Santmyers : Yes, I think Graeme should answer that one.

Mr Evans : I think it would be fair to say that there was a certain amount of consultation but it was fairly nominal and it was more an invitation to provide input. To a large degree that input then didn't carry the day. Perhaps I should be more direct and say it was disregarded.

THE CHAIR: Okay, what was provided that was disregarded?

Mr Evans : Well, we've for many years been making those statements about the needs of the future—of the present and the future—in terms of location, footprint and total size. I must say we have never really had a feeling that we were being listened to. Certainly the outcome suggests that we weren't being listened to. One of the things that have continually astonished me is that, if there's a need in the ACT for the increased hotel space, increased retailing space, increased residential accommodation in Civic—increases in all these things—how does it come about that there's not a need for a doubling or trebling of the community space in the time? If the demands have grown in all these other fields of human activity, how does it come about that it's a relatively small increase in the need for the community sector? It raises a presupposition that the thing wasn't being approached in a fair-minded way.

MS DUNDAS: We've been given, from the department, copies of the documents that were part of their request for tender and they include a report entitled "Griffin Centre Accommodation: Working Party Report" from March 1998. It states that the whole working party agreed that further work "needs to take place to define user requirements and functionality, and to improve occupancy (through design and management arrangements) of a new facility", and that this work "will be undertaken by the Council and the Department ... in early 1998". It says:

Should the development proceed this work will be closely co-ordinated with the proponent.

Did that go ahead?

Mr Evans: Sorry, the work would be undertaken by whom?

MS DUNDAS: The work would be undertaken by the council, which I assume—

Dr Santmyers : Could I ask what page you're on, Ms Dundas?

MS DUNDAS: Page 23, under chapter 8, Next Steps.

Dr Santmyers : Got it, yes.

MS DUNDAS: It says:

This work will be undertaken by Council and the Department of Education and Training in early 1998. Should the development proceed this work will be closely co-ordinated with the proponent.

Was that undertaken?

Mr Evans : Well, can I draw attention to the words there “undertaken by Council and the Department”. Obviously the department has staffing resources and expertise beyond ours. One of the things that we thought was quite inappropriate about the way this matter was handled was that, having arrived at that report where we went to some effort to write in the need for further work to be done, the resources and expertise for that work primarily rested with the department, rather than with a thumbnail, dipped-in-tar organisation such as ours, with no funding whatsoever. That work was never done. It was never done at a professional level. One of the things that needed to be done, of course, was to find out what organisations not then in the Griffin Centre ought to be there, and could mount a good case for being there. That was never done.

We reminded the department many times, orally and otherwise, that that was work outstanding, and it was never done.

THE CHAIR: Was that ever part of the functional brief? Was the functional brief to replace the Griffin Centre or to provide an upgrade of community facilities across the city—

Mr Evans : Without the proper groundwork, we leapt into the functional brief process, which was based on departmental assumptions about the size it should be, and then the functional brief addressed the question of the characteristics it should have. The functional brief didn't address the size it ought to be. It addressed the characteristics it should have.

Dr Santmyers : Yes. Can we try to respond to the chairperson's question, which is: did we consider options other than a new building, which is what I understood you to say.

THE CHAIR: No, it wasn't. When we first started talking about the replacement of the Griffin Centre, were we talking about replacement of the Griffin Centre simpliciter or were we talking about something which was providing higher level community facilities? Any replacement of the Griffin Centre simpliciter is providing higher level community facilities, but were we talking about providing for current tenants—and we know that that's a bit moveable—or were we talking about something much broader than that?

Dr Santmyers : A broader concept, yes.

THE CHAIR: Were you talking about that and was the department talking about something else?

Mr Evans: Yes. That's the point. It's the composition of who constituted the "we" for any particular purpose at any particular time. We were speaking in conjunction with the community centre and on their behalf. And "we" for that purpose was the needs that had already arisen and the needs that were foreseeable for the sector. The "we" in a different sense was the ACT government and the bureaucrats who were simply talking about what was required to reasonably accommodate the existing tenants in a way that would be survivable and, I suppose, wouldn't draw adverse notice. So the "we" varied dramatically.

THE CHAIR: What you're saying is that, from the outset, the council wanted to look at broader issues rather than just re-housing the current tenants and that the government, through DECS, PALM or Land and Property, or whatever they were called at the time, was looking at simply re-housing the current tenants.

Mr Evans: Yes, at all times we were trying to put forward this vision—and we think it a perfectly reasonable, commonsense, feet-on-the-ground vision—of the importance of the community sector to the overall character and spirit of the total Canberra society. And there was never a feeling that that spirit and character—that ambition, if you like, for the character and spirit of Canberra—were understood or being responded to.

THE CHAIR: And during negotiations, either back as early as March 1998 or after the announcement of the preferred tenderer, do you feel that there was any recognition given to the fact that the original functional brief wasn't meeting the needs of the Griffin Centre tenants?

Dr Santmyers: There didn't seem to be, Madam Chair, either in terms of communication, like a phone call or something like that—there were a lot of phone calls initiated by the council, the CCCO, to PALM and they didn't seem to break through whatever the telephone barrier was—or in the issuance of future documents, which tended to ignore any of the contributions that the council had made.

THE CHAIR: So you didn't have ongoing meetings with DECS, Land and Property, PALM, ministers, and there hasn't been an increase in the size?

Mr Evans: Obviously meetings of that character have taken place, but they were meetings at which there was a re-enactment of that basic gulf between the views of the "we" of this character and the "we" of—

THE CHAIR: So you are saying there was not a meeting of the minds?

Dr Santmyers: Definitely not a meeting of the minds.

THE CHAIR: That you had a different vision from the government officials?

Dr Santmyers: Yes.

Mr Evans: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: But the working party was both government and the council.

Mr Evans: That was the first exploration. It was drafted obviously within the department; it wasn't drafted by the community sector.

THE CHAIR: Did you sign off on it?

Mr Evans: Yes, we did sign off on it, and, with the wisdom of hindsight, we should have said, "Hey. No, this is not a document that goes as far as we ought to." But we made sure there were built-in references to the need for further work to be done that we thought would compensate for what we regarded as the deficiencies of that document.

MS DUNDAS: And the part that I quoted is part of that need for ongoing future development that you are saying hasn't happened.

Dr Santmyers: Next steps. The next steps haven't.

Mr Evans: The work that was promised and that made us, with some concern, sign off on it was never delivered on.

MS DUNDAS: On a different tack: generally, what would you ideally like to see happen?

Dr Santmyers: How ideally can we go?

MS DUNDAS: Clean slate.

Dr Santmyers: Well, if everything were perfect we'd like to go back and—

THE CHAIR: And in minus two minutes.

Dr Santmyers: I saw that, yes. Well, ideally if it were at all possible—and I just don't think it is—we would like to go back and see whether or not we could deal with a master plan for community service facilities; that we stop making ad hoc decisions about: "Okay, this community centre will go here, and we'll put a multicultural centre there, and a library there." There should be a master plan that served all of the development in Civic. That would be ideal. I don't think that's possible.

MS DUNDAS: What would you like to see happen to the current Griffin Centre site and the car park?

Dr Santmyers: All right. Two very specific things: one is that more footprint be allowed. There is a little triangular piece of land immediately adjacent to the block that we have which could be allocated as "community", in which there could be possible expansion at a later date should the need arise—and we anticipate the need will arise fairly soon. Another possibility would be that somehow or other there be a Bunda Street frontage in the form of an arcade, allowing for even more retail space through the arcade, which provided entrance to the Griffin Centre arcade. In regard to the Bunda Street

frontage, which went through the retail block: it doesn't matter where the building is as long as we had the frontage.

THE CHAIR: And have you raised that with QIC?

Dr Santmyers: Not with QIC, but it has been raised in petitions to ministers, and to Mr Corbell, and I think we even mentioned it when we spoke with you about it.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I did actually suggest when you met with me as a private member that you should raise it with QIC.

Dr Santmyers: Yes. Well, we haven't had a lot of contact with QIC yet. We have asked for it and we haven't sat down at a table yet to discuss these kinds of—

THE CHAIR: Have you asked?

Mr Evans: If I can sort of offer a comment on your question, obviously in an ideal world it would be appropriate to start off with identifying the diverse character of total ACT society, and the fact that the community sector is a very important part of developing that character. That would be the starting point.

The other thing that hasn't been mentioned today that I think would be useful to do is to understand how the other sectors of ACT society and users of Civic, including the private sector, get benefit from having that community sector there. It does bring people to Civic. It's a great advantage, not just to the community sector but to the rest of the buildings and users of Civic to have a strong community sector in Civic. That's a most important element in this matter.

Mr Heron: Madam Chair, could I make a final comment please?

THE CHAIR: Absolutely briefly, because we're running behind time.

Mr Heron: Thank you very much. What I would like to see, in addition to what my colleagues have put forward, is a vigorous participation in this community facility needs assessment study that's currently under way that has—

THE CHAIR: That's a different draft variation.

Mr Heron: Well, it's a study; it's an assessment. It has as its aim, but in different words to those that I now put forward, to ensure that there is sufficient land to meet community needs.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Heron. I really think that our time is running out, and that that is an argument or discussion for another day.

Dr Santmyers: Can we close? May I close?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Dr Santmyers: I just thank the committee very much for hearing our comments. We appreciate the fact that the issue is still being looked at, and we thank you very much for the time.

ANDREW CLARK and

JURGEN LEBANG

were called.

THE CHAIR: I welcome officers from the facilities management section of the Department of Education and Community Services. I remind you that for the record you will need to state your name and position held within the organisation when you first give evidence.

I would also remind witnesses that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal actions, such as being sued for defamation for what you say to us today. It also means you have a responsibility to tell us the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

I remind witnesses that their comments should relate to the committee's consideration of draft variation 189 and not to any other matter, even if it is currently being undertaken by the committee. As is the practice, I invite you to make a statement at the beginning of the hearings before we move to questions. Mr Clark, would you like to give a presentation?

Mr Clark: No, it's okay I think. I think we can go straight into questions.

THE CHAIR: Are you happy to go straight to questions?

Mr Clark: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Well, let's go back to the 1998 document—the one that Ms Dundas was referring to before, which I have just put away. How much was that seen from a departmental point of view? I suppose DECS is the prime mover in this aspect of the draft variation? Is that correct? Before you answer that, Mr Clark and Mr Lebang, could you give your names and the capacity in which you are appearing before us.

Mr Clark: Andrew Clark, Director of Budget and Facilities, Department of Education and Community Services.

Mr Lebang: Jurgen Lebang, Manager of Facilities Management in the department of education.

THE CHAIR: DECS has the sort of prime movement on this aspect of the whole development. That document that was signed off in March '98—how much of that was seen as being graven in stone and that was the end of it? And how far on in the process did the departmental officers see that as being?

Mr Clark: The indicative specifications provided by DECS in the RFT were informed, as we have heard, by the Griffin Centre accommodation needs working party report in March 1998. The working party report was undertaken in conjunction with the council

and looked at a range of issues. And obviously it informed the process to the extent that it gave DECS an ability to determine what were some of the base requirements which would then be later built on in terms of the facility specification and subsequently PA work that occurred.

THE CHAIR: So at this stage back in 1998, what did you determine were the basic specifications?

Mr Lebang: The study was taken over a considerable period. The working party report actually commenced in '96 and was completed in early '98. It involved an extensive survey of existing tenant groups and community users of the Griffin Centre. It showed a number of things, and I won't go through them all unless you wish me to.

THE CHAIR: Just the salient ones.

Mr Lebang: But it did inform us in relation to the requirements for space in the replacement Griffin Centre. I think some of the features of the existing facility are particularly inefficient in terms of space utilisation. Circulation space is extreme in the area. The building in many senses is not functional for the—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, what do you mean by “circulation space is extreme”?

Mr Lebang: Corridors, movement patterns, landings, foyers—basically, not useable areas to accommodate either tenants in an office situation or community users in a meeting space. The report identified a range of factors. It also identified that there was not a demonstrated significant unmet demand for space at that time. And I say at that time the report identifies that. The report as a whole was used to inform DECS of the indicative need for space and that is the information that was placed into the RFT documentation.

THE CHAIR: In terms of gross and numeric, at that stage in March '98 what was the, say, gross floor area that you thought that you needed?

Mr Lebang: If my memory serves me correctly the total area that was available in the Griffin Centre for tenant space was something in the order of 1,700 metres. In addition to that there was common use space, which is the community meeting rooms and conference rooms available in the Griffin Centre, of something like 600 metres and a total figure of useable area of 2,350 or 2,370 square metres was available.

Mr Clark: So gross floor area in terms of square metres, approximately 3,100.

THE CHAIR: You were saying useable space, 2,350.

Mr Lebang: That's right.

Mr Clark: Of that order, yes.

THE CHAIR: And then you had another 600 roughly, 700 square metres of circulation.

Mr Clark: 760 in the circulation area.

THE CHAIR: You were saying before, Mr Lebang, that that was disproportionate. What is the normal. Give us your assessment of how much circulation space you need for 2,350 square metres?

Mr Lebang: The current brief—and I should be careful in the use of the word “current”—the initial brief that was prepared in consultation with the Griffin Centre provided for something in the order of 3,200 square metres of space for the new Griffin Centre, and the circulation space of that facility was something in the order of 500 square metres.

THE CHAIR: So it is 500 on top of 3,200 or the 3,200 including that?

Mr Clark: Inclusive of.

THE CHAIR: Inclusive.

Mr Lebang: So, we are talking about a space requirement, a useable space requirement, in the new Griffin Centre of something in the order of 2,700 square metres, when their existing useable space that they have in the current facility is 2,370 square metres. So that is a reasonable increase. The working party report does identify that occupancy levels in the existing facility are not good in many instances. It also identifies in the report that the building is an old building, not purpose designed as a community space, and it does have a number of functional problems which lead to it being an inherently inefficient building for its current use.

MS DUNDAS: I have got two questions. Just quickly, can you please define what you mean by consultation?

Mr Clark: Perhaps it would be best if we outlined the process of consultation that occurred, commencing with the working party report through to what has occurred over a 15-month period leading up to—

MS DUNDAS: I would also like a definition of what you take to mean as consultation, whether it is just communication or if it is negotiation?

Mr Clark: It is both communication and negotiation and discussion with, at that point in time, the management groups of the Griffin Centre. Some discussions were held and that fed the development of the working party report, which ultimately led on to the development of the functional brief, which then, if you like, was relied on as part of that process to develop. So it was considered and the final decision, if you like, in terms of the functional brief was then concluded.

Just following up to finalise the square metreage discussion, government after listening to further concerns of the council at that point—I think this was agreed to as part of the budget activities—spent another \$1.7 million dollars, which provided \$500,000 worth of additional floor space area and \$1.2 million worth of additional fit out for the new Griffin Centre, which effectively provides approximately 600 square metres of additional area as useable additional space. So the combined gross—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, how do you get 600 out of 500?

Mr Clark: \$500,000 worth of square metreage.

THE CHAIR: 500,000—sorry.

MS DUNDAS: Back to the consultation: as I have pointed out, one of the next steps identified in the working party document that led to the functional brief included that further work needed to take place to define user requirements and functionality and to improve occupancy. Considering that this report came down in '98 and it is now 2002, and we have seen demand change for community space across the ACT, was that further work undertaken by the department; and, if it was done, has it been used to refine any of the functional briefs that have been passed on to the preferred tenders about community needs?

Mr Lebang: We developed a functional brief in '99, towards the end of '99, over a period of something like four or five months—I think it was four months—with the council. It was an extremely consultative process. I and my officers spent much time going through various aspects of the brief. So it was a consultative process. The views of council were recognised and incorporated in the document when it was possible.

THE CHAIR: So that was between March '98 and when?

Mr Lebang: That was a process that took place towards the end of '99 to develop a functional brief of user requirements for the new centre and it, from memory, took place between October '99 and I think we finally signed off on the document with council in March or April of the following year, in 2000.

MS DUNDAS: The draft variation refers to the changes that were made to separate the youth centre. Normally the Griffin Centre and that community space is split over two areas. That was done, I understand, quite late in the piece—only quite recently. If consultation had been going on since 1998 about community space in this area, why is it that only four years down the track this realisation was made that maybe we need to have two sites of community space? Why wasn't this identified earlier?

Mr Lebang: The RFT documentation was fairly open in the sense that it left it up to proponents to come forward with proposals for development of the site. Broad indicative specifications were provided for the community facilities, but there was no specification as to location of those facilities. As it transpired, the developer put forward a proposal which had the community facilities, the replacement Griffin Centre and youth centre on the one site. That was the proposal they put up. And through the master planning and later on the preliminary assessment consultation process, it emerged that I think it was preferable for all parties—I am sure it was—that the two sites be separated.

MS DUNDAS: So where did that idea initially come from?

Mr Lebang: The tender, the documentation that went out to proponents was open on the matter.

MS DUNDAS: So the proponents, QIC and the others, came up initially with the idea of splitting?

Mr Lebang: Well, the proponents came up initially with the proposal to locate the two community facilities together on the one site. Now, what I am saying is through the process of considering the plans that were put forward and through the preliminary assessment process, it emerged, through consultation with Anglicare, the management group for the youth centre, council and ourselves, that there was a preference that emerged for the two sites to be separate. And through discussion, again with Land and Property and QIC, again through consultation—

MS GALLAGHER: But this idea that they should be separated only came out quite late in the piece.

MS DUNDAS: Can I just jump in here. Is it true—and I have heard this somewhere; I don't know if it is written down anywhere—that the decision to separate, and I think you may have just said it in a long-winded way, was a response to the fact that community organisations were saying that to be roped all into the one wasn't enough. And so it was almost like: “We're going to keep what we're offering you and give you more, but it has to be in a separate spot”?

Mr Lebang: It was in response to a number of matters. It was in response to the desire for the council to have more floor space than existed in their facility and it was also a preference expressed, I think in the end, by both of the community management organisations that a separate facility would be quite suitable for their needs. And we were able to achieve that.

MS GALLAGHER: I am interested in a point that was raised earlier this morning that it doesn't appear that there was much investigation done of other community organisations that currently are around Civic but not located in the Griffin Centre having the opportunity to locate groups from outside within this new state-of-the-art, wham-bam facility. Did the department have a view on that? Did they look at it? Did they consider whether the Junction or somewhere like that that is currently residing in inadequate premises be brought in?

Mr Lebang: The scene is constantly changing, as council has pointed out. But the department at the time and the working party specifically looked at the issue of unmet demand for space in the Griffin Centre. That was a particular item in the working party that was considered and reported on. At that time—and I say “at that time”—there was certainly not any evidence of unmet demand to any significant extent other than anecdotal.

THE CHAIR: So people weren't coming to the department at the time saying, “I need space in Civic”? Are people coming to the department now and saying, “I need space in Civic”? You are saying “at the time”, so do you perceive that there is actually a change in unmet demand?

Mr Lebang: Certainly that was the case at the time. I think events since then, with release of the Susan Conroy report into Civic and the inner north and our own survey that the department has actually conducted of all our community facilities, and looking at

a number of issues from an asset management perspective and also the question of utilisation of facilities across Canberra, I think those two reports, or those two surveys, would tend to the view that the view that we formed was the accurate one, that there is capacity within existing community facilities to accommodate more use.

THE CHAIR: Can we just go back a little. Andrew, you said that we ended up with 2,370 square metres of useable space. Did that include the youth centre?

Mr Clark: No. The youth centre was actually separate to that.

THE CHAIR: Okay. So that was always sort of Griffin Centre/youth centre. There were separate calculations.

Mr Clark: That's right.

THE CHAIR: I might ask QIC this question as well, but when the decision was made not to co-locate the replacement Griffin Centre and the replacement youth centre, was there any sort of cutting down of the community facilities?

Mr Clark: My understanding is that that didn't occur and—

THE CHAIR: So there is actually now quantitatively more?

Mr Clark: There is actually better than like-for-like, yes.

THE CHAIR: Better than like-for-like?

Mr Clark: Correct.

THE CHAIR: We had like-for-like plus 600 square metres, which was the result of a previous budget decision?

Mr Clark: Correct.

THE CHAIR: And are you now saying that it is better than like-for-like plus 600 square metres or better than like-for-like?

Mr Clark: Well, there is a relationship—

THE CHAIR: You understand me, don't you?

Mr Clark: Yes, I do. The short answer I think is that the Griffin Centre has got an increase of gross floor space of 20 per cent based on that which is currently designed. And for the youth centre, there is a gross floor space of just over 800 square metres, which I understand is about a 3 per cent increase off the original floor space.

THE CHAIR: On the subject of the youth centre—we will come to this towards the end of the day—there has been recent controversy in the media about Shelter and the Youth Coalition not being factored into this. Did you factor this in, or are Shelter and the Youth Coalition subtenants of the youth centre?

Mr Clark: Shelter and the Youth Coalition are currently subtenants of the youth centre.

THE CHAIR: Did you consult with them, or did you consult with the youth centre?

Mr Clark: No. Our consultations extended to the management groups at that time.

MS GALLAGHER: We heard, in evidence earlier today from the council, that they felt that they did articulate a desire for further investigation of what the future need might be and that they have a view that the current space is not adequate. They certainly informed us that they had made those representations. Can you give your view on that? Do you think it was just something that the two parties disagreed on?

Mr Clark: I will start with my answer, and Jurgen can come in at the tail end. What we have ended up with is something that will be better than what currently exists. Something done in a functional design or a functional briefs way provides greater flexibility and greater functionality of use and future use and greater floor space.

Some of the concepts that you are talking about now—whether the existing centre is going to have enough room for expansion or whether there is enough facility within Civic generally—are going to be addressed over the next 12 months in a lot of the work that is being performed within the community: facilities needs assessment and looking at and reviewing some of the work of the Susan Conway report and, indeed, some of the work that DECS has done in its own review on use of facilities.

The combination of all that, within the last 48 hours, is a recognition of the strategicness, if you like, of community facilities within a new entity, which will take place on 1 July. A significant opportunity is provided from 1 July within a new departmental structure to look at some of those things and, ultimately, for government to make a decision on how they handle it.

MS DUNDAS: One of the major concerns about the current Griffin Centre site is that it is incredibly run down and, in some cases, quite unsafe as a building to be occupied by people. I understand that it is a government building leased to the community sector at minimal rates. As the landlord, would the government have responsibility to maintain it?

Mr Clark: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: There has been a lot of discussion about the fact that at this stage no maintenance will be done because we are looking at having a new centre done within a certain time frame, be that long or short in your own definition. What steps will the government be taking to ensure that any new facility or, even if this does not go ahead, the current facility is maintained to a liveable standard?

Mr Clark: Currently, the department is running a number of assessments and surveys of all its community stocks on a rolling and a 12-month basis. Interestingly enough, the department recently conducted a survey of the Griffin Centre, which was performed by Totalcare on our behalf. It identified a rolling program over a five-year period, which totals \$182,000. It is important for us to look at the Griffin Centre as it currently stands,

and we will continue to maintain it as it relates to important emergent issues affecting OH&S or safety matters.

MS DUNDAS: Would regular 12-month maintenance checks be done on any new facilities?

Mr Lebang: We do our condition assessments on a rolling basis, and that usually means that we will use the information we get from one assessment for a number of years. We anticipate doing another condition assessment within the next three years.

MS DUNDAS: So once the building is built, it falls into the hands of government to regularly maintain it?

Mr Clark: When you say when the building is built—

MS DUNDAS: If the variation goes ahead and the new building is built by the proponents as part of their contract, will it fall back on the government to manage and maintain that building?

Mr Clark: The ownership of the building will be government. The ongoing maintenance, therefore, will be an issue for government.

MS DUNDAS: So, after all the development, the working party brief and consultations that you did, there was only one page of indicative specifications that you gave as part of the tender process, and this was one page developed by DECS. Is that right? I am looking at annex 4—“Indicative specifications functionality of community facilities”—and it is one page.

Mr Lebang: The RFT did have additional documentation in the body of it that talked about the need to maintain the use of the Griffin Centre over the period. In other words, if the proponent put forward a proposal to either refurbish or replace the Griffin Centre on the existing site, the Griffin Centre function would need to continue in some shape or form somewhere. So it was the indicative specifications in the appendix, but the need for the community facilities and particular requirements in relation to the ongoing accessibility of them were contained in the main document.

MS DUNDAS: How did you reach the conclusion that the Griffin Centre would need five dedicated car parking spaces and the Civic Youth Centre would need six?

Mr Lebang: I cannot recall the precise details, but I think it is the number of spaces that they would have had at the time.

MS DUNDAS: So, even though you are talking about an increase in floor space and then possibly an increase in tenants and usage, there is no subsequent increase in the provision of dedicated car parking space?

Mr Lebang: I cannot recall the precise detail of that, but my recollection is that there would be some assessment of what exists at the present, looking at least to have that amount of space available and possibly additional space. We have also got to bear in

mind in relation to this that the whole development proposed a number of car parking spaces for the total development which would be available to all users of the precinct.

THE CHAIR: Do you want to take that on notice?

Mr Lebang: I can.

THE CHAIR: This might also be something that you take on notice. When you say, Andrew, that you signed off on the next phase in around March 2000, what happened after that in terms of consultation that led to what was a budget decision to provide more funding for the Griffin Centre component? Because we are actually over time, perhaps you might provide for the committee on notice some sort of run-down on what happened next—who met with whom and that sort of thing.

Mr Clark: We can detail that for you, if you wish.

MS DUNDAS: Can we also grab a copy of the functional brief that you have provided? It is not easily available with the development deed.

Mr Clark: So you would like a chronology of events from that day forward?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Clark: Okay. With your question about car parks, Ms Dundas, I think what you were alluding to was whether a formula—X amount of floor space equals X amount of car parks—was applied.

MS DUNDAS: Not a formula. I was wondering how those conclusions were reached.

Mr Clark: Right. Well, thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Are you done?

MS DUNDAS: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

ELGAR STARKIS was called.

THE CHAIR: Mr Starkis, I welcome you as the representative of the Community Information and Referral Service of the ACT. I remind you that, for the record, you need to state your name and the position held within the organisation when you first give evidence to the committee.

I also remind you that these proceedings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain legal responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal actions, such as being sued for defamation for what you may say to us. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the truth. Giving false and misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

I also remind you that your comments should relate to the committee's consideration of draft variation No 189 and not to any other matter, even if it is currently under the committee's consideration. I invite you make a statement at the beginning before we move on to questions.

Mr Starkis: Thanks for that. My name is Elgar Starkis. I am the manager of the Community Information and Referral Service. I have a number of points of concern. You have probably heard them all before, but I can outline them again. They are not of a technical nature; more of a common sense nature. A lot of these points are pretty much reflected by or concerns from a large part of the community sector.

I should pre-empt that we are a ground floor tenant, fronting Bunda Street. Our organisation relies on a street front for serving the community. Just a little bit of background. We service about 7,500 clients, people, anybody in the community who has a problem. We have evolved from the old Citizen's Advice Bureau, so we help anyone with any kind of problem. The prominence to people traffic is very important for our organisation, so that we can provide the service that we are funded for, in fact, by the ACT government.

Just starting with the concerns, our first concern is around the loss of the ground space. The new development has about a 66 per cent reduction in the land area itself. That is of concern. I ask: why? The other factor is the loss of frontage to Bunda Street. It is my understanding that the original functional brief talked about the new community building having a Bunda Street frontage and, as I have pointed out, that is very important to us, because there is a high level of pedestrian traffic along Bunda Street. We see it every day.

We are also visible right into Garema Place. Just simply by changing our signage, we have proved that we increased our client turnover by 33 per cent almost immediately after doing the sorts of things that will make us even more prominent. The move to the Lonsdale Street extension, I am really quite sure, won't have the same amount of pedestrian traffic that it would have had, so we would be less visible. That is our own particular organisation and its needs.

The other concern is that I believe there was pretty limited planning and consultation took place with the community sector. My understanding is that the existing tenants were certainly consulted, which has led to the creation of a floor space which is only 20 per cent larger than the existing area. I know of other organisations and past tenants, like ACTCOSS, that perhaps could or should be there and that haven't really been involved in broader community consultation when deciding the actual floor space of the area. This links me to the financial viability of the management, having been treasurer of the Griffin Centre management organisation. On current community rates it is not viable. It has been losing money over six years. It is heading towards insolvency.

Adding 20 per cent could make it viable on community-type rates. My gut feeling is that a 50 per cent increase would probably make it self-funding and financially viable for a landlord-type organisation like we have now to manage it effectively, to not encumber the government with additional costs. I have concerns about the actual floor space which, of course, leads to the number of tenants and the amount of rental that is being paid, which leads into the viability argument.

I also have concerns about the non-release of the community facility study, otherwise known as the Conroy report, until after the contract was signed between the ACT government and the developer. There is some stuff in there, like the suggestion about a child-care centre, that does not appear to have been taken up in any of the planning. It also links to research and planning of other community centres, even around the world. I have seen some really good ones that incorporate things like libraries and other organisations like the Women's Information Referral Service, which is on the sixth floor of a building elsewhere in Civic that could arguably have a good presence where people really are, where they are going to see the service that is available.

Also of concern is that there does not appear to be provision for expansion for community facility needs in the future. We have this existing floor space plus 20 per cent. There is no extra land space for further development. Who knows what needs will occur in 10 or 15 years time? I consider that to be short-sighted as well. On car parking, I believe that only five spaces have been allocated there. With upwards of 300 workers in a building like that and five car parking spaces, I just have concerns about that.

Even now, we have about 18 volunteers and they have volunteer parking vouchers. The ones who come at midday for an afternoon session to serve struggle to find a car park space now, and there is a big car park there. Some of them drive around for upwards of half an hour trying to find a spot. These are people trying to do a voluntary job of serving the community. When that whole area is developed, I will really have concerns. I ask the question: have the car parking needs been truly taken into account?

They are the main concerns. One of the recommendations I would like the committee to consider is actually increasing the land size to 50 per cent, at least, of the existing area, because currently it is only 33 per cent.

THE CHAIR: That is the footprint. Is that what you mean?

Mr Starkis: The footprint I thought was the bit the building sat on. Is the land size that is allocated for community use a different thing? I am not sure.

MS DUNDAS: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I suppose it is, yes.

Mr Starkis: These are fairly rough calculations, but I do not think that they are too far off the mark. Currently, the land size allocated is only 33 per cent. If it went to 50 per cent, even if we had the existing footprint and the existing building that is being proposed, that would leave some space available for future development, community development in 10 or 15 years time. Who knows what the needs might be in that time? Canberra is growing rapidly.

MS DUNDAS: Such as having the triangle section that Sandy referred to left over for community space to expand to in the future.

MS GALLAGHER: I don't think Elgar was here.

MS DUNDAS: No, you weren't here, but somebody else referred to the same thing as well.

Mr Starkis: That is one recommendation. I have already touched on the other. From a financial liability point of view, instead of a 20 per cent increase in floor space, why not a 50 per cent increase, just to make that self-management thing viable? I am not sure how many floors the existing building has planned, but in terms of thinking about the future, let's assume it was a four-storey building, what about instead creating a six or an eight-storey building now, even if only half of it would be used for community purposes? The other half could be, in the short term, let out to commercial use and the transfer of the use could be made as the need arises, just as another alternative of planning for the future.

To me, a basement car park in a development like this would be essential, so why not? There is going to be an awful lot of people working in that building. Perhaps it does not fit in with the transport policies in terms of encouraging people to travel in buses; nevertheless, there are lots of people who have work cars and what have you and a need to travel within their work and their business. There is a need, I believe, for lots more car parking spaces than five for that number of people working there. They are my points.

MS DUNDAS: We have had a lot of discussion today about the consultation that fed into what is now a draft variation. I know that the ACT council that manages the Griffin Centre would have been representing the Griffin Centre, of which you are a tenant. Do you feel that the consultation that has taken place has been adequate and informed and that the concerns you have expressed to us today have been clearly listened to and taken on over the last three years?

Mr Starkis: Over a period of time. I haven't been that involved in the Griffin Centre, only in the last two years. I know that there was consultation prior to that. Some of my knowledge of that consultation is second-hand; it is not direct. But in the last two years, I don't believe there has been very adequate consultation with the sector at all. I know that there has been limited consultation with the management of the Griffin Centre, but I believe that there needed to be much wider consultation, something like a survey of the whole sector in terms of needs. A simple questionnaire could have given a lot of data that

could have been useful. Many of the tenants are there for perhaps no other reason than the space was available when they were looking. Again, I use ACTCOSS as an example, a peak body with fairly large floor space needs which was there but had to move out because it needed additional space.

MS DUNDAS: One of the major concerns will be the functionality of the new building and whether it will be able to cope with community space demand, but also whether the facilities provided will be of a standard that is required by a community sector that is having to deal with new technologies, et cetera. Have you had any opportunity to put in that kind of detail about the facilities that will be in the new building?

Mr Starkis: Not yet, no. We have actually made submissions about the IT component, if you like, because there is a very good vision from the Case organisation which talks about the need to wire a building appropriately, perhaps to have a central organisation, and perhaps to set up an ISP. There is a model that Southside Community Services has which is incredibly cost-effective and very efficient in terms of managing computer networks within a large organisation.

MS DUNDAS: To whom have you put those submissions?

Mr Starkis: I have mentioned them to all three of you, and also Simon Corbell.

THE CHAIR: In actually feeding into the people who talk to other people involved in this development, have you talked to DECS about that, for instance?

Mr Starkis: I have. I tried to set up a meeting with our funding people, but they didn't seem interested.

THE CHAIR: Who provides your funding within DECS?

Mr Starkis: Tony Carmichael heads that section. It has all changed now.

THE CHAIR: But the people who do the funding are not necessarily the people who are here today, for instance.

MS DUNDAS: And you haven't been invited as of yet to offer some kind of input on the details of the development.

Mr Starkis: No. The minister has suggested that we will be able to have input at a later stage on the detail planning, but our concerns still are that there is some big picture stuff that we do not think is appropriate at this stage, that is, ground space, floor size, parking, those sorts of things. The design of the building, of course, can incorporate those sorts of things.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Elgar.

Mr Starkis: Thank you.

LYNN KREIBIG and

STUART MILLER

were called.

THE CHAIR: Mr Kreibig and Mr Miller, I welcome you as representatives of Queensland Investment Corporation Properties. I remind you that, for the record, each of you will need to state your name and position held with the organisation when you first give evidence to the committee.

I would also remind you that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say to us today. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell us the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

I also remind you that your comments should relate to the committee's consideration of draft variation No 189 and not to any other matter, even if it is currently under the committee's consideration. As is the practice, I invite you to make any particular statements you would like at the beginning before we move on to questions.

Mr Kreibig: My name is Lynn Kreibig. I am development manager for Queensland Investment Corporation, and a resident of Canberra since 1964.

Mr Miller: My name is Stuart Miller. I am investment manager for Queensland Investment Corporation.

THE CHAIR: Do you want to do an audio-visual presentation first?

Mr Kreibig: Just some words first, thank you, Madam Chair. We welcome the opportunity to make a further presentation on our proposed changes in land use for part of section 35, from community to commercial use, and of section 56 from car parking to community use. As stated in the Territory Plan documentation, these policy changes will facilitate redevelopment of the entire site and this part of Civic to ensure that provisions made for the relocation of the existing facilities are achieved.

Committee members would be aware that QIC has obtained approval of a preliminary assessment and master plan for the development, with no further assessment required. We have subsequently been granted a holding lease for section 56, which is now known as block 1 section 84. Although we are aware that the focus of this hearing is on the DVP, we think it is important to articulate the substance of the development master plan for the entire site, as section 35 forms part of a comprehensive and fully integrated mixed use development which we have proposed.

The master plan for the project sets out a framework for the development of the site that has been approved by the government, following substantial and lengthy public consultation over a number of years, which commenced in November 1999. The

approved master plan envisages a high-quality mixed use development that will be integrated with and support the adjacent areas of Civic, which, when fully developed, will contain a wide mix of uses on a number of levels, including car parking, community facilities, housing of various affordability levels and lifestyle options, including mixed use areas with shop-top housing—and that will be a first for Canberra, or at least a first for the city. Other features are hotel and serviced apartments, cinemas, retail and office accommodation, new public roads, street parking, and open space in the public realm.

What I would like to do is to focus the committee's attention on section 35 and the extension of Lonsdale Street, which links Bunda Street to Braddon. It is a planning obligation of the tender process. QIC and our master plan team, led by Professor Phillip Cox, have always endorsed the concept as a critical element of the city's planning and linking this site to the city. To enable greater appreciation of the importance that we see the Lonsdale Street precinct as being, we have prepared a short video presentation which we will run through in total and then we will come back and stop it at various points and answer any questions that you have where you wish to clarify where we are and what we are seeing.

(A video was then shown.)

Mr Kreibig: As everybody would be aware, the provision of the new community facilities was a key requirement of the brief. It is an obligation of the brief to build the new community facilities as part of the first stage of the development and this has remained a core requirement to which QIC has responded. The master plan now envisages two community facilities on separate sites and, as outlined in the DVP document, the initial proposal was to have the Griffin Centre and the youth centre co-located. During early discussions with other parties, this issue came up. We, during our consultation process, became aware that co-location of the two facilities was not preferred and we responded by separating those two facilities. Through negotiations with PALM, we think we succeeded in getting a good urban design result from the proposal for the new youth centre, which is that drawing there and that drawing there.

THE CHAIR: And where is the skate park in relation to those drawings?

Mr Kreibig: The skate park is actually adjacent. That is the built form. This is the skate park.

Mr Miller: There is a guy doing a little thing, but you cannot see it from here. It is in there behind the trees.

Mr Kreibig: We believe that the separation of the two facilities has resulted in an increase in the footprint now available to the Griffin Centre from the earlier scheme of about 40 per cent. We believe that both facilities are located in a prominent, self-advertising and accessible location. Indeed, the new Griffin Centre is in a much better location in terms of its orientation and its access to north-east sunlight than the current Griffin Centre.

Following our selection as the preferred tenderer for the development, the government issued QIC with detailed functional requirements for both the Griffin Centre and the youth centre. We have undertaken detailed space planning studies through our architects,

Cox Humphries Moss, and we believe that the requirements noted within the user briefs provided can be accommodated on the site areas allocated and, therefore, we agree with DECS' consideration of the proposed footprint of the Griffin Centre as suitable.

Interestingly, in the PALM response that is contained in the DVP, PALM note that the floor area of the existing Griffin Centre is 2,340, half of which is 1,170. Given that the existing Griffin Centre is on two floors, we don't see that the ground floor space provided in our submission is that different from the current useable floor space of the existing Griffin Centre.

THE CHAIR: Can you say that again, please, Mr Kreibig?

Mr Kreibig: The existing Griffin Centre is on two floors and it has a useable floor space, noted in the PALM comments, of 2,340 square metres, so one floor is 1,170, just simplistically.

THE CHAIR: And the footprint is—

Mr Kreibig: The site area is 1,130 square metres approximately and the footprint of the building is 980 square metres approximately.

MS DUNDAS: But you are making the assumption that the ground floor and the first floor of the current building have the same useable floor space, which is not a documented figure.

Mr Kreibig: No, we haven't looked at it in that detail. For the new Griffin Centre we propose, as shown in these images, a four-storey structure on a prominent north-facing corner location, with two street frontages in the proposed new Lonsdale Street extension. It is important to note that this is directly opposite the entry to the existing facility but with superior solar orientation. The purpose of the video was to show how prominent this location is within the development.

The new facility will be easily accessible to the city bus terminal, have good pedestrian and vehicular access, have dedicated on-street parking immediately adjacent and have more floor space than the current centre. Unlike the existing centre, it is to be purpose-built and will be designed for flexibility of use and, of course, as a consequence be more efficient and effective.

Our design concept will incorporate the basic elements of use of natural light, passive solar design and informal ground floor gathering spaces, all of which, of course, are obligations under the terms of the deed that we have signed with the ACT government and, of course, as are noted in the functional briefs. I should say that DECS are a very experienced organisation in preparing briefs, as I am sure you would be aware, and the functional briefs are very detailed, line and verse, down to the level of whiteboards and cupboards, et cetera, so we have taken those as being very specific requirements to which we have to respond.

The new youth centre which we propose will be physically separated from the Griffin Centre, as I have said before, and on its own site. It will be located on Ballumbir Street, adjacent to the cinema, as we have shown, and close to residential accommodation and,

of course, to the retail and cinema complex, which will afford the facility passive surveillance, a distinct advantage over its current location. It will include all of the activities that are currently associated with the existing centre, including a new skateboard park and half-court basketball park.

I thought that I might pause at that point for any questions, and I would just like to go on to the aspects of the development commencement and staging after we have addressed perhaps some important issues and questions.

MS DUNDAS: My first question is that somehow I have it in my mind that, in terms of staging the development, what is currently the Griffin Centre, which is planned for some kind of retail or hotel something on the other side of Lonsdale Street, is one of the last stages that you are looking to develop. Is this true?

Mr Kreibig: That is right.

MS DUNDAS: So the new Griffin Centre would be facing what you have described as a broad thoroughfare, but also then a construction site for any number of years; is this correct?

Mr Kreibig: It is inevitable in the staged development of the site, and we noted in the preliminary assessment that it would be over a period of five to seven years.

MS DUNDAS: Is it dependent on good sales of the rest of the development for the construction to go ahead in that last stage?

Mr Kreibig: In terms of the residential, we have residential development partners. QIC will not be undertaking that part of the development. I would imagine, yes, it will depend upon levels of sales as to the speed of construction of that part of the development. That is no less the case for the retail, which is only 12 per cent of the total site area. Nonetheless, as is noted in the development deed and in the comments from PALM, we will have the ACT government monitoring the level of retail or the quantum of retail space that is released to the market to ensure that there is a balance.

QIC, as you would all know, is a substantial stakeholder in the retail market and we are unlikely to fish in our own water until the market is ready for it. So, to answer your question specifically, it is inevitable that through a development of this size there will be construction activity that will extend over a greater period of time. In an earlier scheme that was submitted with the bid, we had the community centre in that location and we made the decision to put the community centre on this site because it would be less interrupted by construction activity, firstly. Secondly, we thought that putting it away from its current location would be sensitive, so we relocated it to this point.

MS DUNDAS: My second question may be more for Stuart as investment manager. What are QIC's feelings about the possibility that the draft variation may not be approved by the Assembly, that we do have these planning and political processes to go through and there is no guarantee at the end? What contingencies do you have in place, considering that you do have a development deed for the land and that you have handed over money for the site?

Mr Miller: The employment pages, I guess! QIC have envisaged that this DVP will be successful. We have to go ahead and hopefully that will be the case. In fact, we have gone ahead and tendered for architectural services for the Griffin Centre, for the roads, for the infrastructure. If it doesn't go ahead as planned, then we would have to go back and revisit the master plan for what is section 56. We currently have a holding lease over the site, so we are the current crown lessee, and we would have to revisit that.

MS DUNDAS: Do you have any idea at this stage whether you would want to stay on section 56 and redevelop that without looking at section 35 or would you pack your bags and go home?

Mr Miller: No, definitely not. It is an important part of the site. It is a project that QIC is extremely excited about. It is a great mixed use inner city project that is going to help support the Canberra Centre as well as much of the rest of the city. No, we think there are great opportunities with the cinemas, an additional supermarket and, particularly, housing, which is an important component of the development. We will have a range of housing opportunities there to support the whole of Civic.

Mr Kreibig: The significant impact on the Territory Plan variation being unsuccessful would be that we would need to re-master plan the entire site. That, based on our experience with the Canberra Centre project and with the section 56/35 project to this date, would impact probably in terms of an 18 months to two-year delay to the project. As Stuart has said, we have a crown lease. We have paid our money. We are a significant stakeholder in the city. We see that the mixed use component of the development, particularly the residential, as a significant engine driver for all of Civic and it is no less the case for the development proposed on the balance of the site other than the residential. We see it as an important aspect of mixed use development in the city and it will benefit all retail traders, much less ourselves.

THE CHAIR: Mr Starkis talked about making sure that the Griffin Centre was up-to-date in an IT sense. This may be a question I should have asked of DECS, but do you have a view on that? In what you have to provide there, do you have to make provision so that they can wire the building to state-of-the-art wiring?

Mr Kreibig: Yes, we do. What we haven't talked about is the flexibility of the Griffin Centre. Essentially, we were bound by the bid document as to the quantum of space that was to be provided. Essentially, we will build what the ACT government tells us to build. If there is the capacity to increase the size of the Griffin Centre vertically, subject of course to PALM and their view of that, it is a fact that any commercial building over four floors is more space efficient than the same area of building over two floors because of the efficiency of how you distribute circulation space. Somebody talked about that; I think it was DECS. We believe that certainly to be the case. I haven't got a figure on what the loss of efficiency would be, but I would imagine that we would be talking about something in the order of 20 per cent. That is certainly the case for commercial office buildings.

THE CHAIR: Mr Kreibig, you talked about mixed use and said, I think, retail was 12 per cent. Can you give a rough breakdown of the various uses on the site?

Mr Kreibig: Areas?

THE CHAIR: Proportions, whatever is convenient.

Mr Kreibig: I can give you sizes approximately, because they are in the master plan. The residential component is in the order of 320 units. That will depend upon the market as assessed by the residential developer.

Mr Miller: Certainly, by area, car parking and residential are the two major components. The retail represents 12,000 or 13,000 square metres; office, about 20,000 square metres. For residential units, whether they be serviced apartments, hotels or traditional accommodation, we are talking about 500 or so.

Mr Kreibig: There has been greater sensitivity about the quantum of retail space, which is why I mentioned it. A lot of the people to whom we spoke believed that retail space was a significant component of the proposed development, but it isn't. It is between 12 and 15 per cent; it is less than 15 per cent.

THE CHAIR: By way of comparison, Mr Miller, you said 13,000 square metres. How does that compare with, say, the current Canberra Centre?

Mr Miller: The current Canberra Centre is 52,000 square metres.

THE CHAIR: And when it is finished, when the expansion in Ainslie Avenue is finished?

Mr Miller: 57,000 square metres.

THE CHAIR: The expansion in Ainslie Avenue is 5,000 square metres.

Mr Miller: Yes, or thereabouts, 4,500.

THE CHAIR: Okay, I have something with which to compare it.

Mr Miller: But on a site that is 4,500 hectares, in considering the master plan, we think that that is about the minimum that we could provide on site to make this urban village, to use someone else's words, stick together as a mixed use project. For it to integrate with the rest of Civic, there have to be those retail opportunities, obviously.

THE CHAIR: I have two other quick questions. One is about housing affordability. People talked about housing affordability. Do you see this as mixed affordability, and to what extent, or is that something for your partners?

Mr Kreibig: The PA has acknowledged that there will be a mixture of housing in the development and we say that the residential accommodation—and we have a document which we would like to table, with the leave of the committee—will include affordable, adaptable and accessible accommodation which will make a substantial contribution to the life of the city because of the mix.

Mr Miller: Whilst there has been no prescription, it is an important element, particularly of CBD project such as this, that it houses a range of opportunities. The wrong thing would be to have 350 three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartments. That would be particularly boring in the CBD.

THE CHAIR: I want to go back to the question of permeability, not in a way that PALM talks about it, but in the sense that this is already an area that is basically covered with tar. When you are doing the building, and this is an environmental issue, what will be done to try to preserve the stormwater on the site or will it all be going into the stormwater system? What sort of permeability is there for water that falls on the site to seep through into the ground water? Excuse me, it is a hobby horse.

Mr Kreibig: We haven't gone to that level of detail, but, as a consequence of the layout of the site and the green space within this development, it would be far more permeable than it is today.

Mr Miller: I think that is something in the assessment of the PA. That is certainly something for us to address, particularly so that when it comes to the DA stage individual sites will be assessed against the prescription of the time, obviously; so it is something that we are cognisant of.

THE CHAIR: There is a lot of literature and it is increasing on how you design modern cities for that sort of permeability.

Mr Miller: Exactly.

THE CHAIR: In relation to the document that you have tendered, we will take it, but it isn't tabled as evidence until we can look at it and formally agree to receive it.

Mr Miller: I understand.

THE CHAIR: But thank you for that. Have you got any further questions?

MS DUNDAS: One more. You have heard a lot of discussion today about car parking. Can you explain how you envisage car parking working over the site for the residents, the offices, retail and providing some form of provision for the rest of the city?

Mr Miller: As has been mentioned a couple of times, we have to provide car parking for whatever we build, for the generation of the site, plus the 875 car parks, which I understand was about the average occupancy of the current 1,000, if I can use that little analogy. As for the office accommodation, and let's say that that is delivered as envisaged with a hotel and serviced apartments, then there would be a contained basement underneath those buildings for the use of those buildings, if you like; so a couple of basements underneath. The same with the residential; there is a discreet basement underneath the main residential site which would be for the purpose of the residents. The remaining two blocks, if you like, is where we will house the public car parking, as well as the car parking that is generated for the uses. That will be on Bunda Street, directly opposite the retail core. Within that area, there will be the 875 cars plus the generation for the cinemas, the supermarket, the retail, housing, commercial along there, as well as the community development.

MS DUNDAS: Would QIC operate that multi-storey car park as it operates the one for the Canberra Centre?

Mr Miller: More than likely QIC's retaining long-term ownership will operate them, as per the Canberra Centre. Just making a point there, within the Canberra Centre at the moment we have 180 retailers that we have to do the best we can to ensure their survival. Obviously, car parking is a huge issue for the survival of retailers, not only in the Canberra Centre but also the retail core of the city. So it is absolutely not in our interest to see that not function for the city.

THE CHAIR: One of the points that have been made to me on a number of occasions, not today, is the concern that because you have these structures there will be a certain captivity, that the people who go there will be funnelled into the QIC developments rather than out into the retail core. How do you address that?

Mr Miller: Difficult. I guess they have to walk past our shops. But we have never seen the Canberra Centre as exclusive to the city. If someone chooses to park in our car park, over the side of the city or walk down from Lonsdale Street, that is their choice and there are other opportunities for them to move through the city. It is important for the success of this site if you don't really know where the boundary of the section 56 site is or where the boundary of the Canberra Centre is, that it be linked to the rest of the city. If the car park is owned by QIC or someone else, it will be a success if no-one knows that. I can only answer it in that regard. It will be part of the city fabric.

THE CHAIR: A part of that is addressing it so that people know that they can exit into Bunda Street or into Lonsdale Street, rather than funnelling them the other way.

Mr Miller: Yes. That will be part of a traffic management plan that, again, will have to be addressed at the time of individual DAs.

Mr Kreibig: Your question about permeability raises the issue of landscaping. We have undertaken with the ACT government, through our development deed, to provide all of the landscaping and public infrastructure at the front end of the development.

MS DUNDAS: What do you see as the front end?

Mr Kreibig: At the beginning. So all the public realm will be established as part of the first stage of the project. Indeed, as Stuart said, we have tendered the infrastructure design services, we have assessed the tenders and we are ready to appoint because, in the event of a successful DVP, we would like to hit the ground running. Contrary to an earlier assertion, the statutory process that we have been through has been prolonged for a number of reasons, a change in government, the appointment of committees. We would like to get on with it and bring life and more business to the city, including to our own related businesses. We would like that put on record.

THE CHAIR: It is on record. Everything you say is on record. Thank you very much, Mr Kreibig and Mr Miller.

ANGELA SEYMOUR was called.

THE CHAIR: I welcome the representative from ACT Shelter. I remind the witness that, for the record, you will need to state your name and position held with the organisation when you first give evidence to the committee.

I would also like to remind the witness that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say to us today. It also means that you have the responsibility to tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

I also remind the witness that her comments should relate to the committee's consideration of draft variation No 189 and not to any other matter, even if it is currently under the committee's consideration. As is the usual practice, would you like to make a brief statement before we go on to questions, Ms Seymour?

Ms Seymour: Yes. Thank you for asking me to appear at this committee meeting. My name is Angela Seymour. I am the executive officer of ACT Shelter. I would just like to make a few brief points. We have two main issues. One is specific to ACT Shelter and the other one is a more general point about community facility planning.

ACT Shelter currently has a sublease from Anglicare. Although we are currently housed close to the Griffin Centre, we have not been involved in the negotiations regarding this community space at the new section 56 up till now. The same is true, I might add, of the Youth Coalition. I have discussed these points with them, although obviously I am not here to represent them. As a result, ACT Shelter has registered an interest with the Council of Cultural and Community Organisations for office space in the new development, so it has relevance to us. We are grateful for being considered.

The major barrier that we see, though, to this is the cost of parking. Currently, we are quite lucky in a way to have free parking. It is our understanding that this will not be available for occupants of the new centre. It is important that we do have a car for our work as a peak organisation because most of my work is attending meetings with government departmental staff and other housing services throughout Canberra and that involves, obviously, driving there, going out two or three times a day sometimes. It also involves carrying boxes of refreshments, et cetera, to different places, so we really do need to have a car available.

As you may be aware, community organisation staff are on particularly low wages as a rule, and this will be an added strain on our ability to recruit and maintain staff at the level that we work, that is, at the policy level. You are looking at a comparison of probably SOG C or ASO6 in the public service area. It is an interesting corollary to this that most of the government employees that we deal with on a very regular basis do have free parking, so it is really of concern for us.

That, in a way, leads to our second point, because we do feel strongly that there is a need for an overall community facilities planning strategy in the ACT. Last year, ACT Shelter made a submission on variation No 164 of the Territory Plan, which was the variation on community facility land use policies. It focused on land use for older persons. The accompanying papers to this submission stated that a community needs assessment is undertaken by the urban development program annually. Whilst this needs assessment looks at overall land demand for community facilities, there appears to be no central point for this information to be channelled; for instance, perhaps there should be a community assets register to centralise management of the facility.

The second point, therefore, is that, in order to ensure that the community organisations are provided with sufficient suitable and well located premises and that those premises are efficiently managed, we feel that a whole-of-government agency needs to be set up. At the moment it is all split according to where your funding is from, whichever department you get funding from. That is if you do have community facility space. A lot of the community organisations actually are in commercial places because they haven't been able to find community facilities, property that is earmarked so.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, Ms Seymour, that is actually beyond the bailiwick of this committee.

Ms Seymour: Yes, I understand.

THE CHAIR: I am cognisant that there are community facilities matters before us, but today we need to concentrate on DV 189.

Ms Seymour: Yes, which is why we think that the community facility that is being built there needs to be incorporated into some sort of larger asset management plan, otherwise we are going to get the same problems as we have had over the last few years with the management of that particular building.

THE CHAIR: Back to the issue of the needs of ACT Shelter and whether they are being met in this regard, there was some publicity two or three weeks ago about ACT Shelter and the Youth Coalition, but we will stick with Shelter at this stage. On the feeling that you had not been part of the process, have you always been aware that this has all been going on and do you feel that you haven't been included in the process by DECS or by your immediate landlord, which is the youth centre? What is the initial or current problem that has brought you here?

Ms Seymour: Might I say that we did not generate that publicity, because we had been working with the cultural organisations and with our own funding body. We have been talking to them about it and saying that it is going to be a problem in the near future when our building gets torn down. As a sublessee, we are in no position to get involved in whatever properties may become available. Anglicare have intimated to us that they probably won't have room in their new facility, which actually isn't the Griffin Centre; it is the youth centre. So it was up to us to take it in hand and deal with those issues ourselves. But, as I said, we weren't entitled to have that voice.

THE CHAIR: You do not see that you have a particular tenure or a particular entitlement.

Ms Seymour: No, we don't at all, because we are a sublessee and we could be evicted at short notice. I think we have a 14-day notice lease, so it is very tenuous. What we are saying is that it really needs to be taken in hand by government as a whole-of-government approach to managing community facilities for community organisations.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions?

MS DUNDAS: That was very comprehensive.

THE CHAIR: Comprehensive and to the point. Thank you very much for your time.

Ms Seymour: Thank you for hearing me.

THE CHAIR: I would like to thank all the witnesses who have appeared today.

The committee adjourned at 1.11 pm.