



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT
AND TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

(Reference: [Draft variation to the territory plan No 308:
Coovong Street urban renewal area](#))

Members:

**MR M GENTLEMAN (Chair)
MR A COE (Deputy Chair)
MR A WALL
DR C BOURKE**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 2 MAY 2013

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms V Strkalj (Ph: 620 50435)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

WITNESSES

CALVERT, MS VALERIE, Reid resident..... 11
EMERY, MR CHRISTOPHER ROBERT, Reid resident 15
STRANG, MR PETER McKENZIE, Reid resident..... 21
TEATHER, DR DAVID, Reid resident 1
TEATHER, DR ELIZABETH, Reid resident 1

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Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 3.01 pm.

TEATHER, DR DAVID, Reid resident

TEATHER, DR ELIZABETH, Reid resident

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon everybody. I declare open this first public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services on draft variation to the territory plan 308—Cooyong Street urban renewal area. I advise witnesses that to provide a record the hearing will be transcribed by Hansard. In addition, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting) Act 2001, the proceedings of public hearings are broadcast to government offices and the media and are webstreamed.

On behalf of the committee I would like to welcome our first witnesses, Elizabeth and David Teather. Can I draw your attention to the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege, which are outlined on the blue-coloured privilege statement that is before you on the table. Could you please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of that statement?

Dr D Teather: Yes, no problem.

Dr E Teather: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. The committee has your submissions, Nos 5 and 9. Do you wish to make any changes to those submissions at this stage?

Dr D Teather: No.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Dr D Teather: Yes. Thank you very much indeed. We will take perhaps up to 10 minutes in total for the two of us. Would that be okay?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Dr D Teather: I am here as a resident of Reid, in a private capacity. Let me say first of all that we appreciate very much indeed your invitation to join you this afternoon. We would like to begin by addressing three points: firstly, civic design in Canberra; secondly, the proposed redevelopment, particularly as it relates to section 7 Reid; and, thirdly, what we suggest may be a better alternative for this redevelopment than the one that you have seen thus far.

With respect to civic design in Canberra, I refer to the first two paragraphs of my written submission. I know that three of you were born in Canberra, so I do not need to point out the tremendous legacy of Canberra's first 100 years and this city's worldwide reputation in civic design. This reputation for excellence in civic design is not only Griffin's plan for what has now become inner Canberra; it is also the work of government agencies, particularly the NCDC, that culminated in the newer urban centres.

Canberra's reputation for Civic design has also come about because of the thought and effort that have gone into changing the landscape of Canberra from a limestone plain to a city of trees, which helped to reduce the extremes of our climate in both summer and winter.

The essence of Canberra comprises the built form, the natural setting and the relationship between those two. Canberra is a city at home in its landscape and distinctive as the bush capital because it is at home in its landscape. This characteristic, the bush capital, remains important. It has been won through the hard work of many people over many years and should not be discarded lightly.

So much for civic design. We would now like to turn to the proposal that you have received for redevelopment, and particularly at section 7 Reid. Elizabeth would like to outline how this proposal has changed quite radically over the past three years and why it is not acceptable in its present form.

Dr E Teather: I am a member of the executive committee of stage 1, UP202, Argyle Square. I object to the current proposal on several grounds, but the main one I will speak to this afternoon is that the proposal is an utterly inappropriate one for this site. I am going to focus on section 7 Reid as well.

First I will give a little background on myself so that you can see where I am coming from. I am a geographer. When I retired I was a senior lecturer at the University of New England in the department of geography and urban and regional planning. For 10 years there, I worked alongside a colleague who is a geographer, an architect and an experienced town planner. I assisted him on a course on environmental design for trainee urban planners. This was a studio-based course, not a lecture course. So it was one-to-one or small-group work in a design studio.

My experience persuades me that this proposal that you are examining today breaches basic urban design principles in several ways. For example, it has not taken its context into account. Close neighbours were not consulted. What is more, we were informed by ACTPLA staff that such consultation was not required. This needs remedying. And if built, this proposal will reduce to a travesty this segment of the world-acclaimed Griffin plan for inner Canberra.

What seems to have happened is that the developer, the Community Services Directorate, instructed a private firm, Purdon Associates, to produce a design for the footprint of the ABC flats maximising the number of units. Please note that Purdon's design was modified three times between April 2010 and the publication of their final report in September 2011. In each of the revisions, the number of storeys became higher, despite consistent comments from members of the public that they were concerned that the buildings were too high.

There is a grossly misleading statement in Purdon's final planning report dated September 2011 on section 7 consultation. I have copies for you here which I will leave with Veronica. It implies that the consultations that took place were on the final proposal, but they were not. They were consultations on earlier and lower rise proposals.

After the Purdon report was gazetted as DV308—if gazetted is the right term—the public was invited to comment. 137 comments were made, and only four were in favour of the proposal. You will by now be able to guess how much these critical comments were listened to. The density of section 7 Reid was increased yet again, in a fourth proposal, and it is this fourth version of the proposal that has been sent to the minister as DV308.

Let me reiterate again what many have already said in response to the last two proposals. We do not need two tower blocks of 15 storeys and a series of monolithic high-rise blocks. Instead, and in contrast, along Kogarah Lane facing Argyle Square, what is needed is a stepping up of new buildings from three to four storeys to a maximum of six storeys, and that along Cooyong Street.

Fewer one- and two-bedroom units would mean that a more stable population could be attracted. Retirees, middle-aged couples whose kids have left home, young married couples starting a family—these would fit the existing character of Reid. And they are just as appropriate inner-city residents as the transient young singles who are likely to occupy the proposed small apartments.

There are three conclusions. Firstly, public concerns have been all but ignored, in fact flouted. Secondly, the proposal that you are now considering is so ludicrously out of scale with its context that it is shocking. It is out of scale with its close neighbour, Argyle Square, and out of scale with the low-rise suburbs of Reid and Braddon. Thirdly, the deep alienation and hostility of those who live next door to this proposal in Reid could have been avoided with a more sensitive design and a much more effective consultation process, one that in fact took the word “consultation” seriously.

The proposal for blocks of high rise right next door to a suburb known as a garden city heritage suburb and to a complex as well designed and appreciated as Argyle Square is crass and, in terms of Canberra as a whole, is tragic.

Dr D Teather: As Liz has pointed out, the redevelopment plans for section 7 Reid have changed radically in the last three years. I have copies here and I will hand them out afterwards if I may. To take the two extremes, the indicative master plan by Purdon and Associates in April 2010 proposed on the Reid part of the site 200 units in predominately three- and four-storey buildings. The current proposal, three years later, for the same site proposes 386 units, that is, almost twice as many apartments, in predominately 10-storey buildings. That is the difference from the first iteration of the plan to the present situation. So you can see why some people are rather aggrieved about that sort of change.

There have been changes elsewhere. Seventy-five per cent to 80 per cent of the area is in Braddon. There have been changes on that site as well. But it is the changes in Reid that have been the most dramatic.

I take a rather different track in my written submission to this committee. I compare section 7 Reid, which is labelled precincts 4 and 5 on the recent plans, with precincts 7 and 8 in Braddon. These two pairs of precincts, in Reid and Braddon, are comparable because they have approximately the same land area, approximately the same dimensions and the same orientation—north-south, east-west—and so on. But

there the similarity ends.

Quite different structures are to be built on these two comparable areas. The buildings proposed for precincts 4 and 5 Reid are much taller and bulkier than those proposed for precincts 7 and 8 Braddon. Three hundred and eighty-six units are to be built on the Reid site, only 136 on the comparable part of the Braddon site.

We submit that the proposal for redeveloping the Reid part of the site is arbitrary, grossly out of scale and, to use a tennis analogy, deserves to be ruled out of court. I think you will agree that all residents of Canberra, no matter where they live, are entitled to expect that their homes will not be overlooked or overwhelmed by what is grossly over-scale residential or commercial development that is totally out of keeping with the neighbourhood.

What about a better outcome! We do not doubt that there is need for redevelopment of the areas of the ABC flats. We have got no problem with that being done. But it needs to be done bearing in mind the context and the scale which is appropriate. The area now proposed for redevelopment in Reid is adjacent to a wholly residential and very successful development called Argyle Square, which was built just over 30 years ago, between 1979 and 1986. We happen to live there, at the far end, at the end nearest Mount Ainslie.

Argyle Square currently accommodates approximately 300 people in apartments and townhouses, mostly three and four-storey buildings. If the whole of the site now slated for redevelopment in Braddon and Reid were to be redeveloped to a density similar to Argyle Square, the redevelopment site would accommodate 700 people. If the heights were increased from the three and four-storey buildings in Argyle Square to four and six storeys, the site would accommodate 1,000 people. We think this would be a much better outcome.

It would more than double the number of people currently resident on the site. It would be a densification of some magnitude. It would produce some very attractive residential real estate—and Elizabeth targeted the kind of clientele she had in mind—which would be likely to appreciate in value over the years, which is questionable with some of the present proposal. It would be of a scale appropriate to the site. It would be minimally intrusive to its neighbours and would be in keeping with the suburbs in which it is located and with the heritage of the bush capital.

We would be happy to respond to any questions that you may have on what we have written and what we have said.

Dr E Teather: However, to finish, we would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to visit the Argyle Square complex in the company of a resident. We are going overseas the day after tomorrow, but Chris has kindly offered to show you around. This invitation, which I am giving to Veronica, is on behalf of all six bodies corporate in Argyle Square. We do hope that we will see you there.

Dr D Teather: We have two reasons for this proposal: firstly, to help you better judge the likely impact of the proposed redevelopment on its immediate neighbours; and secondly, so that you can consider an alternative form of development which would

meet most of the objectives, not all of them, of this development and see how that would fit.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Are you able to take some questions from the committee?

Dr D Teather: Yes, of course.

MR COE: Would either of you like to speculate or comment on what you think the intentions or motivations were behind the upscaling or the increase in density of the proposal and how it has morphed over the last few years?

Dr D Teather: I would guess that it was partly driven by two things, the main one being a concern with the projected financial return from the whole proposal. To what extent you get increased financial return from a larger number of sometimes smaller units is a matter for the real estate people rather than me to make judgements on.

But I would have thought that a greater mix of types of apartments in the proposed development would appeal to a wider range of owners and tenants and would provide a more mixed population, which would mean a more longstanding community which is not subject to some of the degeneration one sometimes sees in a large number of very small apartments which are likely to be occupied by a very transient population. I think the motivation is driven by financial return to the government and to the directorate concerned, but how well based that is is a more open question.

Dr E Teather: I think the interesting thing is that something was driving somebody to instruct Purdon to increase the number of units. It flew in the face of the public comments, right from the beginning, right from June 2010. There were very many comments concerned about height. You can see that on the web. This was ignored again and again.

Dr D Teather: To follow that up, perhaps I could show you three extracts from the different stages of the reports. I have just passed around three extracts from three different versions of the reports which have been issued. The consultation report of June 2010, as far as I am aware from the time on there, was the first one to be made publicly available. You will see that on the Reid site the majority of the buildings there were three- and four-storey, as I said.

The second one is two iterations further on, from the main Purdon report which became public in September 2011. The size jump, particularly again on the Reid site, has been very considerable.

The final one is the one that is before us today. Even that shows an increase in the one remaining example of the Bega flats, which it was proposed be retained for heritage reasons. That is contained in the 2011 report from Purdon. It suggested retaining one of those three-storey blocks of the Bega flats for heritage purposes. Even that has gone in the most recent report and has been replaced by a 10-storey block which will begin to overshadow not only Cooyong Street but Glebe Park.

Dr E Teather: Glebe Park is going to be overshadowed in any case by this proposal in the morning. It is already frosty in the morning. I cycle through there to go

swimming. It is not very nice. There will be even less sunlight in Glebe Park with these buildings.

DR BOURKE: Could you tell us what you think the impact on Kogarah Lane might be?

Dr D Teather: The impact on the housing immediately to the east of Kogarah Lane will be very considerable because people will be faced, when they go out into Kogarah Lane, with something which I can best describe in this way. If you go down Bunda Street to the intersection with Genge—going down Bunda Street to the north and then going around that curve in Bunda Street towards Northbourne Avenue, on the left there is a street, Genge, which is much broader than Kogarah Lane. So if you go halfway across the pedestrian crossing on Genge Street and look to the buildings immediately in front of you, going down Genge Street, that is roughly what people are going to see. There is a bit of a difference because you have got straight up about 10 storeys instead of six, going back and then going up again. But that is very similar to the kinds of things people are going to be met with.

The other aspect, of course, is the matter of traffic congestion, services and so on. We live right at the other end of Argyle Square, so we are not personally familiar with the degree of traffic which there is down Kogarah Lane. Perhaps other people would be better placed to comment on that than we are.

Dr E Teather: The other thing is, of course, that the Argyle Square units which have balconies which can see down to Kogarah Lane, and there are quite a few of them, will lose their privacy because the occupants of the apartments in the high-rise building will be able to look straight into these balconies.

The interesting thing is that in the Purdon report they make a point of saying that they have designed it so that the apartments within their proposal will have a fair amount of their privacy protected, but they make no comment at all about the fact that the privacy of neighbouring residential units will be intruded upon significantly.

DR BOURKE: Can you also comment—I do not think you talked about it in your submission—about the proposal for a mixed-use development there, with shops, commercial tenancies, restaurants and things like that?

Dr E Teather: I know that the Calverts will be addressing that. They are coming along later today. It might be best to leave it to them. They have gone into that in a lot of detail. They are very concerned about it. What it will do, of course, is to attempt to produce—there is a planning term for it that I cannot remember—an interesting street facade. But I do not quite know how it is going to work when you are looking from that ground-floor level, which is the only level that the commercial activity will be allowed in on Cooyong Street, when you are looking to a six-lane highway which is very busy a lot of the time and very noisy, and then you look across that at back entrances to car parks and goods entrances to big department stores and so on. That does not seem to me to be a particularly promising location for commercial activities. Certainly, for the first time, it intrudes commercial activities into Reid.

DR BOURKE: People can already conduct home businesses in there.

Dr E Teather: Well, that is different. I think it is very different.

MR WALL: You have mentioned on a couple of occasions the fact that the comments from public consultation have not reflected what has been delivered in the concept drawings.

Dr E Teather: I think it is the other way round. Could you say that again in a different way?

MR WALL: What we are seeing in the concept drawings is not reflecting the public comment?

Dr E Teather: I see what you mean, yes.

MR WALL: From your experience what has been the consultation process with residents? What opportunities have you had to provide feedback?

Dr E Teather: Neighbours were given, in the first place, no opportunity to comment. If you look at that first report of 2010, there were the stakeholders which you have listed there, which included Pedal Power. Pedal Power think it is absolutely wonderful because they will be able to cycle down Cooyong Street. They have taken no notice whatsoever of the impact on neighbours.

So in that first consultation there was no direct attempt to contact the people who were living right next door to this big development; none whatsoever. The letterbox drops just did not seem to happen. The letterbox drop that worked was in December 2012, wasn't it?

Dr D Teather: 2011.

Dr E Teather: 2011. The developer called a meeting which a lot of us went to, and we realised to our horror what was being proposed. David and I took it upon ourselves to letterbox drop a large number of residents in Reid and all of Argyle Square and to call a meeting, at a week's notice, in the Korean church in Reid. We put out 12 chairs and 70 people turned up. Peter Johns from the directorate very kindly came along to do a question and answer session. We said, "We don't want you to talk about it; we want you to answer questions," which he did, very well. But he was shattered at the level of opposition.

At that meeting, which I chaired, I asked people, "Would anybody like to vote in favour of the 15-storey towers?" and there was not a single hand raised. I said, "Okay, who doesn't like the 15-storey buildings?" and everybody put up their hands. So this was a meeting that was called by private individuals which created a lot of interest.

Dr D Teather: We have lived in Argyle Square now for 10 years. We did not realise that a redevelopment of this area was even being contemplated until about November 2011, which was 18 months after the bulk of the consultation was done. We traced what had happened and there had obviously been a couple of meetings. There had been meetings of residents of the ABC flats. There had been two or three of those.

There had been a couple of public meetings and information sessions held opposite where we live, on the other side of Ainslie Avenue, at Gorman House. They were presented with the first plan that I have copied and passed to you. That was then revised, and a revised version of that was put out to two further meetings at Olims in June of the same year, 2010.

I think there were 35 written comments in relation to the first two meetings and there were 12 in relation to the second two meetings. Obviously not a lot of interest was generated. As I say, we have lived in Argyle Square for 10 years and we have talked to a lot of neighbours since November 2011 when we discovered that redevelopment of this area was being proposed, and the vast majority had not been aware until there was a raising of awareness in about November 2011, when the Purdon report was published in the previous month—September, I think. That raised awareness, and since then there has been a lot of interest.

Dr E Teather: But to be fair, the developer did do all the right things in terms of advertising on the web and in the newspaper. But we do not always keep an eye on all of these things.

MR COE: When you say “the developer”, who do you mean?

Dr E Teather: The Community Services Directorate.

THE CHAIR: Can I come back to your earlier comments particularly about height of the development. You have reinforced, I think a number of times, the two 15-storey towers on Ainslie Avenue. You were concerned about the height levels throughout the development, particularly in Reid. Help me try to understand the opposition to the height. You mentioned that it is going to overshadow Cooyong Street.

Dr E Teather: No. It is going to overshadow Argyle Square and the places to the east and north.

THE CHAIR: What we normally look at when we look at overshadow is the winter solstice and the amount of sunshine you get into a development. That is not really your concern, it is more that they will be able to view into elsewhere from their height?

Dr E Teather: As I said at the beginning, I have many objections to this plan. Certainly the overshadowing and the intrusion into privacy is one thing. There are shadow diagrams in the Purdon report. You will see from those that at 3 o'clock in the winter solstice, yes, there will be shadow into the townhouses on the end of Ainslie Avenue closest to Civic. A whole row of them will be shadowed then. We had to get Purdon to redraw the shadow diagrams because they did not show that Glebe Park was going to be overshadowed. They managed to cut it off, conveniently, on the bottom of the page.

Dr D Teather: In the report there are a number of inconsistencies and errors. It is not a finely proofed document, I am afraid.

Dr E Teather: The landscaping plan is not.

Dr D Teather: The broader thing is that I was looking yesterday at some writings of Walter Burley Griffin. One of his comments about Canberra was that he did not see the need to upend large buildings in Canberra. He did design a 14-storey building, which was built in Melbourne some years later—I will get the right century—in 1924. His comment about the buildings in Canberra was that one of the important things was that they should not impede the views and the vista of the setting of Canberra.

When we moved years ago to live in the city of Dunedin in New Zealand, which was founded 50 or 60 years before Canberra, one of the things that interested us was that around the city centre there were a series of low hills, and some larger hills beyond, but the low hills were covered by bush almost. This was the town belt which had been reserved by the city council in about the 1880s, quite early, as a public reserve. Although there was a lot of development beyond there, from the centre of the city you could always see the skyline and you could always see bush on that skyline. That is a very important aspect of Canberra as well. It is one that Burley Griffin emphasised.

Another place we lived in for seven or eight years more recently was Hong Kong, a very different place, with a lot of tall buildings. While we were there during the 1990s, those high buildings began to impinge, particularly on Hong Kong island, on the skyline. That changed the character of the central city.

You would think that Canberra, compared to those two locations, has lots of high hills around and that we are not really bothered about high buildings in Canberra because we have got high hills. That forgets the fact that we are not at sea level here; we are about 600 metres above it here. Although Mount Ainslie may be 880 metres or so, that is not very different from where we are now. You do not have to go very high with buildings in Canberra to impede upon the view of its surroundings and the way it sits in its context.

THE CHAIR: In regard to the hills and the views of Canberra, there is a regulation RL617 which says you cannot go beyond a certain height anywhere in the ACT. It actually lines up directly with Parliament House, which was of course the old Capital Hill. You are not allowed to build above that height.

MR COE: Just the city centre actually. Is the fact that it is being developed by the government a concern to yourselves or people that you have chatted with? Do you have a view on whether it should be private or whether it should be completely in the control of government?

Dr E Teather: I suppose my reaction is that the proposal has been commissioned by a government directorate and is so inappropriate. That makes me start to wonder about the sort of democratic process that we have.

Dr D Teather: I do not know the extent of the relationship between the directorate which has acted as the developer in this business and the directorate which is in charge of monitoring the planning process. We did have a meeting which included people from both directorates. This was in about March last year.

Dr E Teather: This was, again, a meeting that we requested.

Dr D Teather: It was simply to be able to bring some of the concerns, which had been expressed to us and which we shared, to the people concerned with the planning process.

Dr E Teather: It was the territory plan variation unit.

Dr D Teather: It was a very useful meeting. About a dozen people from different parts of the community and four or five people from the government were there. How close were the professional relationships between people in the body which we understood was to be doing some adjudication of the planning proposals, on the one hand, and the proponent of these proposals, in other words, the Community Services Directorate? What sort of a relationship there was there, we do not know. There is a potential for a conflict of interest there in the sense that you have got two departments of the same organisation and a possibility that a proposal from another branch of the organisation may be looked at differently, less critically perhaps, than a proposal from an outside organisation. I do not know, but that sort of question was raised in our minds by that process.

THE CHAIR: We thank you very much for your attendance this afternoon. We do have some other witnesses that are to come along. We will let you know when the *Hansard* is ready. We will take any comments from you then, if you need to make any changes.

Dr D Teather: Thank you very much.

Dr E Teather: Thank you very much for your time.

CALVERT, MS VALERIE, Reid resident

THE CHAIR: The committee has considered and agreed to your request that your evidence not be videoed. For the benefit of viewers, this session will be broadcast via audio only. May I draw your attention to the blue-coloured privilege card that is on the table before you. Could you please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Ms Calvert: Yes, I do.

THE CHAIR: In what capacity are you appearing today?

Ms Calvert: I am a Reid resident; I also live in Argyle Square.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Ms Calvert: Yes. I would like to use the very conveniently placed whiteboard behind me. I will talk for about five to seven minutes and then I will answer questions.

I will write a [couple of diagrams](#). That is a brief summary of the progress of this development over that period of time, from 2010, when the proposal was for three- to four-storey buildings and one 10-storey building containing 200 units. Initially, as you can see visually, it was really very much lower and over the period of three years, with each iteration, despite feedback that people did not want to go too high and that it was reasonable to keep it within this sort of level, it has absolutely progressed from something that originated with three to four storeys with one 10-storey building; then it went to three to 15 storeys; and now, today, it is really a massive 10 storeys—one six-storey and 15 storeys.

The number of proposed units is very important because that has escalated as well, as you can see, from 200 to 345 to 385. And the gross floor area, based on the figures provided in each of these iterations, has increased from 20,000 square metres to 31,000 and now 37,000.

This is a problem. The problem really worries us. The implication is that people are not listening to what we say. People like me, my husband and other people who we know and speak to in Reid, and in Argyle Square obviously, feel that we have just been ignored and that there is a relentless pursuit of growth. That is what has been demonstrated.

The bottom line is that we feel quite disempowered. Despite the consultations and the apparent due process, at the end of the day the results are this column here, where it is way up to 37,000 square metres. That is a real issue.

The issue is the impact on Reid, which is our main concern here. It is a denser footprint. There are more units, obviously, and it is larger. It is higher. It further degrades our residential amenity—one of the key criteria and one which is always listed as something that developments should be aware of. And in many ways it degrades that criterion, which I am sure we will get on to later when we go to questions.

We believe the rationale for this amazing growth and ignoring our protests and our concern is project yield, a relentless pursuit of a better return. It is called in their papers a “project yield”. It has been very clearly stated in the report on consultation that their objective—and by “their” I mean CSD—is to maximise project yield and to put the funds into public housing. It is good to put funds into public housing but not at the expense of others, and other residents, and where it creates damage.

Basically, no business is able to or does relentlessly pursue the profit maximisation goal without due regard to doing damage to others. There are laws that prevent that. In this case we perceive that this proposal is going to do damage—damage to Reid residents, to Argyle Square residents—and actually we do not have any protection from this process, apart from this sort of forum. The protection has not existed; it has just grown and grown. Therefore, we see the need for some balance to be brought back into the discussion.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a paper copy to share with us?

Ms Calvert: No, I did not bring a paper copy. I will write my second scintillating diagram down here. Is that all right?

THE CHAIR: We can turn the whiteboard over. We will do that for you.

Ms Calvert: I am drawing a seesaw really. Basically this is a seesaw. It is about balance, that point I made previously. I feel that we are down here at the very bottom, and up here on the other end of the seesaw is whoever is behind this proposal. They have it all. They are pushing forward exactly what they want. They are taking a bit of account of what we are saying but not much. Things have grown denser et cetera. As the song says, the winner takes it all. What we would like to see is some movement up here towards some sort of equilibrium and movement down there so that there is some compromise here and we feel that we are not being ignored and that our concerns are actually addressed realistically and seriously. We would like to see that occur.

There are two other points. I guess we see this as a somewhat extreme proposal. You have heard of the great wall of Canberra. That is the way this project has been discussed locally within the Reid area, within Argyle Square. You have seen the pictures of what it is going to look like, this massive wall of tower blocks right on the edge of Reid, creating an amazingly, one might say, awful view of a huge mass of buildings, the great wall of Canberra.

We also regard this as an extreme interpretation of the infill strategy. Infill is good. We support that. We would like to see redevelopment, but nowhere have I seen that infill means massive high-rise towers. That is not my understanding of infill. That is one view of infill. In our view, that is an extreme interpretation.

It is very dense and very crowded. It is quite oppressive. It could be so much better. The point my husband would like to make, although he is not here, is that it is not necessary to surround the CBD with a wall of towers like this. It just is not necessary. Canberra is unique. It is why we live here. It is a bush capital. You get vistas all over the place. From Mount Ainslie, it is wonderful to look down Ainslie Avenue and see a

clear demarcation of the city.

This is moving the city forward into Reid. It is creating, in our view, this awful wall of apartments. We would like to have Canberra remain unique and not try to become a Sydney, as this almost seems to be with these massive towers. It is extreme in that it proposes changes to the periphery, at the edge of Reid. A residential suburb essentially will contain this mass of towers. In many ways, we find the proposal quite extreme, and there needs to be some moderation of that, in our view.

What we seek from you—and I will just write this up—is fairness, as a principle. We would like to see an acknowledgement of heritage—and I will elaborate on that in a moment—an acknowledgement of Argyle Square, right beside it and impacted dramatically, and a respect for the residential character of the area. If these points are acknowledged, then out of that we would like to see no commercial zoning—and obviously we will talk about that further—lower, less dense development and basically some modifications that make it manageable and a place we would like to be, a place we would like to share with our neighbours.

That is essentially the discussion.

THE CHAIR: We have a little time left for some questions.

DR BOURKE: You talked about damage to Argyle Square by residents of this proposed development. What did you mean by that?

Ms Calvert: By “damage”, I mean the incredible proximity. It is not very far away from Argyle Square. It is just across this Kogarah Lane. It is very tall. Therefore, there are issues of privacy from overlooking. If it were zoned commercial mixed use, which is the proposal before you, it would mean that there would be two levels of shops coming all along Cooyong Street and very close to Argyle Square along Ainslie Avenue and along Boolee Street. That is the proposal.

It would change the character of the area and, therefore, change the character of the relationship between Argyle Square and what is adjacent to it. It is the oppressiveness. Irrespective of the fact that it has been lowered to six storeys immediately along Kogarah Lane, as you know, that is still high and all those storeys behind it, going up to 10 and 15 storeys, are very close and overlooking. Compared with the low-rise, three-storey Argyle Square, it is pitting one against the other. It is a harsh junction.

DR BOURKE: Do you have any concerns about the Braddon side of the development?

Ms Calvert: I have not really looked into the Braddon side as much. I looked into Braddon in the context of thinking that it is pretty dense and that great wall of Canberra does obviously incorporate Braddon and makes it very dense. The issue for Reid is that it is half the depth of the Braddon footprint. In half the size, they are trying to cram a great deal. I cannot comment too deeply on the Braddon aspect.

MR COE: You mentioned earlier the heritage concerns. Could you expand on that?

Ms Calvert: Yes. Reid was one of the first heritage-listed suburbs. I am not absolutely positive about that. Nearly all of Reid is heritage listed. Nearly all the single-storey houses in Reid are heritage listed. It was created as a garden suburb and the heritage listing, therefore, covers the style of course from the very early days of Canberra plus the garden setting. The heritage aspects are very important. Although Argyle Square of course is not heritage listed, we interact with that area and this is why it is such an attractive place to live.

This large, mega complex will be overlooking and creating a very large, tall barrier to the heritage area. It will be in Reid as well. It is not in the city. It will be in Reid. So we see many adverse impacts on the heritage aspects. People from the Reid Residents Association and others have commented quite considerably about the detrimental effects on heritage. That should be a factor.

You will note from our submission that we are concerned that the Heritage Council have not made any comment about this particular proposal, possibly because they believe that Argyle Square not being heritage listed means they had no reason to comment on the rest of the heritage aspects of Reid. One half of all objections made commented on the need to respect the heritage aspects of Reid, and this proposal does not.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time this afternoon. The committee will now take a short break for afternoon tea.

Meeting suspended from 4.03 to 4.17 pm.

EMERY, MR CHRISTOPHER ROBERT, Reid resident

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the committee's hearing on DV308. I welcome our next witness, Mr Emery. Can I remind everybody that in order to provide a record the hearing is being transcribed by Hansard. In addition, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting) Act 2001, the proceedings of public hearings are broadcast to government offices and the media and are webstreamed.

I would like to draw your attention to the blue-coloured privilege card that is before you on the table. Could you please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Emery: Yes, I do.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Could you please tell us the capacity in which you appear today?

Mr Emery: I am a resident of Argyle Square. I am here in a private capacity. I am also the convenor of the executive committee for stage 4 of Argyle Square, but I am not here in that capacity. I have lived in Argyle Square for 25 years.

THE CHAIR: We have received your submission. Do you want to make any changes to that submission?

Mr Emery: No.

THE CHAIR: I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Emery: Thank you very much. [On the screen](#) there we have a view of Argyle Square, and down here is the entrance to Kogarah Lane, which has been talked about a lot. It is a very narrow laneway with no footpath and no real setback from the lane to Argyle Square.

I want to quickly go through the area that is going to be demolished because I am particularly conscious of the liveability of what we replace it with, despite the directorate telling us that they do not expect children to be living in this development—or not very many at all.

These are the ABC flats. There are lots of playgrounds, lots of trees. In fact there are 190 mature trees in this development, of which seven are protected. This shows the green areas, the grass. Where people are living now it is quite nice. The buildings were renovated about 10 years ago. They were all redone on the outside. They were air conditioned. It is a pretty pleasant place to live and we would not like to lose a lot of this amenity.

Most of the buildings are three-storey—a Swedish design, I understand, when they were built in the 1950s. They adopted a design from Sweden. Then there are the eight-storey flats at the back, the Allara flats, which are now almost entirely student accommodation—CIT and ANU—because they did not really work as social housing. They did initially, but with the changes in people's behaviour, the lifts became

virtually unusable. People would not use the lifts. They would rather walk up seven storeys than get in the lift, because they did not know who they were getting in with, and problems like that. That is as it was reported to me. So it was taken over for students. It is a very nice area.

This is the first indicative master plan. You can see that there is a 10-storey block there, one there, here, each side of Ainslie Avenue. Most of this area here, which is called Reid section 7, against Argyle Square, which is up here, was four storeys, three storeys and four storeys down here. So that was the first plan.

I think what happened there was that the planners were told that they had to comply with RZ5 high density residential and they had to comply with the multi-unit residential development code and the high-rise multi-unit development code. Basically, apart from the fact that 10 is a bit higher than those codes allow, and six to eight is recommended in the codes, this is really done pretty much in accordance with the codes. So down here in Kogarah Lane, I happen to live in that block there, and I have a three-storey development directly opposite, across the very narrow lane.

With the next master plan, there was consultation on that and people said that it should come down a little bit, perhaps—10 should be eight. I think most people thought, “We’ve got eight-storey there now; we can’t really argue that we can’t have eight.” So people said that eight would be fine. The result was that they put it up to 15. Suddenly, opposite where I live was a seven-storey block instead of three-storey. There are 10s, 13 here, 15 here, 10s—but stepping down very well towards the residential area of Braddon in here, because it steps down from 10, five, six, to three. They have got the width there to do it.

We then got the next version and the block next to mine went to nine storeys, next to my three-storey block. Nine down here; three was retained in here, for historic reasons, and the stepping down was continued in Braddon. But the heights up against Gorman House were going up.

That was not well received, and another version was produced. Now the block opposite my apartments is nine storeys high. So it went from three to six to nine. People were starting to get pretty bewildered about this. The thing was that they had introduced a precinct code. I have always been told by various people that the precinct codes were intended to provide extra protection, but they can also be used to throw zoning out the window, which is what they have done here. It is the precinct code that says what height each building will be, and once the precinct code says that that is the height, you cannot argue against it. So when this goes to the DA stage, if the territory plan says, “That’s the height the building’s allowed to be,” we have got no argument against the DA because the territory plan has a precinct code that says, “That building will be 15 storeys high,” which is pretty upsetting.

We are fighting it at this territory plan stage because we are not going to have much hope once it gets to the DA because the territory plan overrides, and precinct codes override, every other code. That is in the legislation.

This is the very latest one, where they did start cutting things down, and opposite my place now it is back down to six, which is still twice as high as what I had originally.

By comparison, five years ago in Turner this was built. Here we have three-storey apartments. Here we have a full-width road with a dividing line on it, two-way traffic, and here we have eight storeys, stepping down to three storeys because over on this side is three storeys, which is what the zoning says they should do. You have to be the same as the adjacent but you can then step up.

That is the building that was built. You can see how they have done the stepping down. That is on a narrow site that is comparable with Reid section 7, just to show that it can be done and can be done sympathetically. I have walked around that development, and it is pretty good. I cannot see how the people have a complaint. For a start, it is a full-width road. That makes a big difference.

This is another stepping down in Turner. It is about the same vintage, a little older. This is stepping down to a laneway which is quite narrow. Here they stepped down from three to two, and then onto the laneway.

This is Kogarah Lane and this is demonstrating our fears for this lane. It is not going to be widened. They have said that they will not widen it and they will not remove the car parking. This is what happens when service vehicles are using that lane.

What is going to happen in the development is that one of the large underground car parks is going to empty into Kogarah Lane. There are 268 spaces, and the traffic engineers say that between one-third and one-half of those vehicles will enter Kogarah Lane in a one-hour period in the morning and return in a one-hour period in the evening. About 100 vehicles will come into this little lane from the underground car park. It did have double that number of vehicles from two car parks but they moved one car park entrance around to the next street. I cannot quite see how that is going to work because the entrance is going to be extremely close to Cooyong Street. Cars turning will suddenly encounter vehicles coming out of the car park.

This is the view from the Canberra Centre now, looking up Ainslie Avenue. I think you have probably all seen that view. Mount Ainslie is in the background. This is the proposal. This is what they are going to do to the view up Ainslie Avenue. That was done by a graphic designer. It has all been scaled. What they refer to as the wall of Canberra, of course, are these ones running down here and running down there.

Just to finish off my comments, this is the design for the high-speed rail station in Ainslie Avenue. It occupies two-thirds of the site that was going to become part of the proposal. There was going to be a 15-storey block. The other 15-storey block was going to be there. That is Kogarah Lane running up there. There is going to be a multilevel car park taking up quite a lot more of the site. By the time you look at the church at the end, assuming there are going to be problems there, the people do not wish to vacate. The high-speed rail might put a big spanner in part of the development.

In my submission I spoke about rezoning not being necessary and that RZ5 would be perfect—high-density residential zoning. Get rid of the precinct code which says that you can have 15 storeys in the area.

I have mentioned the traffic. The height and scale, I think, are ridiculous. This is huge. Solar shading has not been done for Glebe Park. They have done all their solar

shading at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We understand that the solar shading in the morning will cover the entire playground area in Glebe Park. I have made a number of other points on the amenity and character of the area, heritage considerations and the boundaries.

One of the things that worry me also is that the government have stated many times that they believe that social housing should be pepper-and-salted in developments. The housing directorate have said that they do not intend to follow that policy with this development, that all the 10 per cent of social housing remaining will be in one block, because they do not like dealing with bodies corporate.

If you come and inspect the ABC, I will demonstrate the sorts of things that bodies corporate just would not permit. With the external maintenance—I do not go inside; I do not know what is inside—they are running down the outside. Even though it was beautifully restored, water systems have been abandoned, bricks have come off and not been replaced, ornamental fences have fallen apart. The external maintenance almost does not exist. I can understand that bodies corporate could be a bit of a pain to housing, because they would insist that maintenance be done properly.

I am also concerned about the economics of the whole exercise. At a Reid Residents Association meeting, a representative from planning and housing was asked whether the business study that had been done for this included the cost of rehousing the people who are being displaced. There are 324 units of social housing there now that will not be there once it is redeveloped and it drops back to 10 per cent. There are 324 apartments that have to be built somewhere, unless you are just going to add to the waiting list for social housing. I do not think anyone wants to do that.

On the best figures that I can find, it costs about \$300,000 to build a modern apartment, even if you get the land for nothing. It is in that vicinity. We are talking about 300 apartments. We are talking about \$100 million being the cost of rehousing the people who are currently going to be displaced because of the development. The best estimate that I have seen of what they can sell this site for is between \$40 million and \$50 million. That would be optimistic.

Considering that the ABC flats were all built by the commonwealth department of works, the same old department of works that built the hospital, demolition is going to be a huge job. The developer has to do the demolition first. That is going to be a big cost and a huge inconvenience, incidentally, to us neighbours. The demolition will not just occur in a few days. It will probably take about a year to demolish, judging by what it took them to demolish the office block where they built the Manhattan apartments now.

Where is the extra money going to come from? Are the taxpayers now going to subsidise this development to the tune of some \$40 million or \$50 million? Is the ACT that well off that it can afford that type of subsidy to a developer? The cost-benefit should have been done, including the cost of relocating the people that you are displacing, the people whom you want to move to Gungahlin or somewhere. I am not quite sure where they are going to build all these.

The 10 per cent that is remaining should have been pepper-and-salted through the

whole development. It is government policy. How can the housing directorate have a different policy to the government? That totally puzzles me. They have put it in writing in the response to the consultations.

I guess everyone is going to be accused of being a NIMBY. I am not a NIMBY. In fact, I have been a strong advocate of Bega flats and was pretty instrumental in putting pressure on to get them renovated, get them made much better than they were. Quite frankly, there are some disadvantages in living just a short, very narrow lane away from social housing. I have lived there for 25 years and I have never had a serious problem, personally. I like the people. The vast majority of them are very acceptable people. I worry that there are people saying that this needs to be redeveloped because they think that is going to get rid of the social housing.

Social housing should be centrally located. It should be close to public transport. It should be close to retail jobs and things like that, and it should be close to transport. It is a wonderful place for social housing. Most of it is going to be displaced. That is sad.

THE CHAIR: Are you happy to take some questions?

Mr Emery: Yes.

MR COE: You mentioned that you have suspicions that it is in effect being mothballed—the current site. By that term I mean that the government perhaps is not giving due consideration to maintenance of the existing site. Would you go as far as saying it seems to be deliberate in that it looks like a foregone conclusion that the site is going to be redeveloped?

Mr Emery: I do not think so. I think the maintenance is being done by the lowest tenderer. When we were going around and taking those photos, people said, “What are you taking photos for?” We said, “We’re hoping to slow down the demolition of all of this.” They had no idea. They said, “What do you mean, demolition? We live here.” “How long have you lived here?” They said, “Twelve months.” I said, “Probably the people before you were told that it’s all going to be demolished.” He said, “That might be why they won’t fix the power outlets in my kitchen.” He said, “I’ve been trying to get them to fix the power outlets in my kitchen for three or four months; they say it’s not worth doing.” I said, “How do you operate without power outlets?” “Oh, we run a cord from the lounge room.” That made me start to think that perhaps they are being run down. They cut the grass and they pick up the leaves. They are just doing that today, actually. There are attempts to keep a certain amount of tidiness, but it would not pass muster with a body corporate.

DR BOURKE: In your recommendations on page 4, recommendation (e) says:

Reduce the population intensification to only double the existing density.

Can you elaborate on what that means?

Mr Emery: The intensification that they are going for is to almost quadruple the number of people living there. I think doubling it would be enough. I do not know whether this committee is involved in—this has to be sold. This development has to

be sold. The high rise has to be sold. I am told by one of the largest real estate agents in Canberra now that people are getting very wary of high rise in Canberra because there is no builder's insurance once you get above three storeys. I initially did not believe this but I found out that that is correct. There is no builder's insurance once you get above three storeys.

With the very expensive apartments at Kingston on the edge of the lake, the body corporate has been told it is going to cost \$7 million to make those apartments watertight—\$7 million. I said, "Isn't it covered?" "No." There is no builder's insurance once you get above three storeys. It is up to the body corporate. So people are going to be increasingly reluctant in Canberra, because we have this rule, or an allowance for builders, not to have insurance.

I put that in my recommendations. I think building defect insurance should apply to all residential buildings. Why does the height have anything to do with it? It is protecting the population who are buying these places, sometimes off the plan. They are encouraged to buy off the plan. And there is not even an insurance company keeping an eye on building quality. Insurance companies will do a wonderful job of keeping things on the straight and narrow, provided you make the insurance compulsory and make sure that people have got the insurance.

Kogarah Lane has to be widened. I do not think they can say, "It's got some services running along it so we can't widen it." Kogarah Lane has to be widened. I am very worried about the fact that 190-odd mature trees are going to come down, including every street tree along Cooyong Street. They all go. There is going to be a public reaction when they take down 190 mature trees as part of this exercise. I do not think Canberra understands. This is the biggest removal of trees that Canberra has ever had. It is going to occur in this development, right next to Civic.

I think the reserve price for selling it should be sufficient to pay for the relocation of those 324 apartments of people. So put a reserve of \$100 million on it and that should cover the cost of rehousing them. Anything less and taxpayers are subsidising it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time this afternoon, Mr Emery.

STRANG, MR PETER McKENZIE, Reid resident

THE CHAIR: Thanks very much for coming along. Can I draw your attention to the blue-coloured privilege card that is before you on the table. Could you read that for us and confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Strang: Yes, I have seen it before. That is fine.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. In what capacity are you appearing today?

Mr Strang: I appear as an interested individual. I am a resident of Reid.

THE CHAIR: We have received your submission No 27. Do you wish to make any changes to that submission?

Mr Strang: Not at this stage, no.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Strang: I do not intend to address my submission in detail. I will certainly touch on some of the issues. You have obviously received a number of submissions in this round, and an even larger number last time. There were some very detailed submissions from people like Chris Emery. Given also that it is late in the day, I do not want to bore you or hit you over the head again with some of the arguments you have heard.

I do see some problems with the proposed development. What I would really like to talk to you about today is what I would like to see at the site. To be quite clear, I would like to see increased density. I believe it is far better for Canberra to rise up than to spread out, but I do not think this should be at the expense of existing residents, although clearly any change has some impact. But that has to be a balanced impact.

I would like to see a mix of social housing to replace some of the units that are there already. I am not sure what the right mix is, but there should clearly be some social housing. The pepper-and-salt concept makes a lot of sense, rather than having a ghetto, as I guess the site exists there at the moment, with a lump of social housing next to other housing.

I would also like to see Canberra, especially if it is a government project, building high-quality units—something that we will be proud of in years to come rather than just something that will provide a quick buck to maximise yield.

This is a residential area. Sure, it is on the edge of Civic but these parts of Braddon and Reid are predominantly residential areas with low rise. I think it is quite out of place to suddenly start putting 15-storey or even 10-storey towers. I would like to see a medium-rise development.

I do not think saying it is next to Civic is a good enough argument. There are a lot of residential areas around Civic where no-one would contemplate putting high-rise

towers, and I think it is a really bad precedent to say, “Okay, it’s next to Civic; we’ll put up high-rise towers.” There are plenty of areas in Civic and in other town centres that could be developed and where there could be high rise. I am not opposed to high rise, but not in what is a residential area.

I would like to see development on a human scale. I went to a very interesting talk today—and I note that a member of the committee attended—that was given by Minister Rattenbury. Some of the words he used rang true with me. He talked about development on a human scale. I refer to cities in Europe and in North America. I lived in New York. Sure, there are some high-rise towers in midtown New York, but although New York has a very high density, it is brownstones or terraced housing of perhaps four storeys. I cannot recall too much at six storeys. In a lot of New York it is four storeys. You can walk down the street and talk to people, there is a lot of street life, yet there is high density living. But it is a great environment.

That is the sort of thing I would like to see in Canberra rather than isolated tower blocks where everyone goes down in the lift, gets in their car and drives off to work. I think that sort of development is not going to serve Canberra well. I want to see something on a human scale.

It is also important to keep a reasonable amount of high-quality open space. There are playgrounds and so on in that area at the moment. As much as possible I would like to see that open space retained.

That also raises the issue of trees. There are some superb trees. There are a number of listed trees and there are a number that probably could be listed, given the criteria—large trees, well-established trees, including some native trees. Some of the manniferas are marvellous trees. I think they should be kept as much as possible.

I would also like to see, and I think we should have, greater provision of social infrastructure. Too much of the densification of Canberra is based on building unit block after unit block. I think this is one of the problems in existing parts of Braddon and Dickson. There is no neighbourhood planning, there is no planning of an area. All that happens is that someone comes along, knocks down a few houses, puts up some units and it does not create a real sense of social cohesion. In large numbers of these developments there is no other infrastructure, there is nowhere you can buy the proverbial pint of milk or the newspaper or the loaf of bread. People get in their cars. There is nowhere to eat. I do not want to see that happen in this area.

I know my view is a little bit different from most of the other submissions, but I think it would be good to have a small amount of retail and commercial, so that there can be a cafe, so that the residents of Reid in the new development can have somewhere to meet, somewhere to mix, some casual social infrastructure. I must say that with shopping I do not find that largely in Civic. Civic, as you know, is dominated by the Canberra Centre and it is a pretty unfriendly place. But it has got a place. A lot of people like it. I think there should be a place where people can meet more casually.

Look at what has happened in Braddon. That has a completely different feel. People flock to it. Start a new cafe there and suddenly it is full. I do not say that cafes are the solution to all our social problems but I think they do provide an environment where

people can meet each other, make new friends and see old friends in a casual environment. I think having a bit of that in this new development would be good—and even having a few offices so that people who, for instance, live in Reid have somewhere they can work close to home.

Once again, looking at the European example, European cities have a mix of development, largely. They have shops downstairs and an office or two, and housing upstairs. Sure, that model does not work everywhere but I think in this sort of area you could have some of that without compromising residential amenity. I think a little bit of it adds to life, adds to the opportunity to have those casual meetings and to mix with a range of people.

That sort of thing could perhaps be combined with some open space. It is the sort of thing they are trying to do now at Kingston foreshore. Who knows how well that is going to work, but there are squares there, there are courtyards, and the retail and also the commercial sit right next to that space. I went on a tour a couple of weeks ago. Cox architects have got their office at Kingston foreshore, and just over the way there will be cafes and restaurants. They love it because it is somewhere they can get out and mix at lunchtime.

I am not sure whether you have been to Argyle Square recently but there is a defunct shop there, which ran for many years. I think about 10 years ago it closed. Having a shop, having somewhere you can walk to and get a few necessities and have a cup of coffee would be a great thing.

Both a concern and something I would like to see is to ensure that traffic and parking impacts are minimised. I do not feel that they have been adequately addressed in the proposal. There are some great examples around Canberra now of things that people are doing to promote active transport. The Nishi development has a huge amount of bike parking.

One of the Kingston foreshore developments is going to have GoGet CarShare. This is an englobo development. They are going to have a car-share car that everyone can use. You can hire it. If you need a car to go to the market or something on Saturday, you can hire it for two hours. It is a lot more flexible than hiring a car. You join as a member, you book it online, you go up with your pass, hop in the car and return it a couple of hours later. That is the sort of thing that helps reduce the number of cars that people need. I think reducing the number of cars that people need means they are going to drive less and there is going to be less impact from traffic on the local environment.

Another thing that needs to be looked at is high-quality bike parking. I know there are standards and so on about how much bike parking should be provided but developers on the whole try to minimise these. Once again, at Nishi in Acton there are hundreds of bike parking spaces. I am not sure how well they are used but all of this stuff encourages people to use other forms of transport. Right in Civic there are plenty of places where you can get to by walking or by bike or, if necessary, by public transport.

Another thing that Nishi have done which I think makes a lot of sense is to reduce the number of car parking spaces attached to a unit. Nishi, when they were selling units,

were selling the units and the car parking spaces separately. So rather than just have the standard provision, some people who do not really want to have a car do not need to buy a car parking space with their unit. There are lots of creative ideas and ways. It is not rocket science; they are used all over the place, and they should be used more in Canberra, and certainly for this development.

I think part of reducing traffic impact is having better pedestrian links. Getting from Reid or Braddon to Civic at the moment is a real nightmare. There are no pedestrian crossings, basically, from Ainslie Avenue past the park to the south down to the Convention Centre. People cross all the time there. There are a huge number of cyclists and pedestrians that take a risk to get across. That is something that could be done now.

If you have got more people living there, you need better access. Even at Ainslie Avenue, you have to make a two-part crossing to get to the Canberra Centre. It used to be a straight run through. Now, to suit the parking requirements of the Canberra Centre, being a pedestrian in Reid or Braddon is not very attractive. These things do make a difference.

It is also important to ensure that there is adequate visitor parking on site. I must admit that I have not gone back and checked the details but I do not think they have significantly changed. The initial concept was that visitor parking would be in the Canberra Centre. That does not make sense. People are going to park. They are not going to cross Cooyong. If they are visiting friends, they will park throughout Reid. If you are going to have visitors who are going to drive there, then you need adequate visitor parking on the site. It is not appropriate for them to clog up the streets of Reid.

I would also like to echo another comment that Minister Rattenbury made which I agree with. He was saying that infill is important. He was saying that infill is important but that it needs to be better planned, not just to pop up in residential areas. That is what is happening here. We are talking about high-rise infill popping up in a residential area. I think that is really inappropriate.

In summary, I think the concept of redeveloping the ABC flats is a good one but I think it needs to be done well. I think the current development does not do it well. I think the idea of having high-rise towers in a residential area does not make sense.

DR BOURKE: You mentioned high-rise towers. What do you define as a high-rise tower?

Mr Strang: That is difficult. It depends on your context. In an area that is predominately one storey to three storeys, even 10 storeys I would regard as high rise. Fifteen is exceedingly excessive. I think 15 is a joke. I think it is an architectural dream to stick with these two 15-storey towers. In this area, it should be four to six, perhaps eight in some parts where there is a bit more setback. Having eight to 10 along that very narrow section of Reid, I think, does not make sense.

DR BOURKE: You talked about a difference with the town centres. What would you envisage would be appropriate there?

Mr Strang: It depends once again on the context. I cannot tell you the answer about that number, but I do know that the LDA had plans for a tower development in Woden. Because there has been so much public outcry, they have stepped back from it. I think in that area of Woden, apart from at the southern end of the other tower, there is no residential that I am aware of. No-one lives there. I would think there is more latitude to have a high-rise tower if you are not impacting on existing residents.

I cannot be prescriptive. It depends on the context. I think it is something that the Canberra community needs to have a say about. It needs some leadership. We need to think about the sort of city we want to create and not just say, “Someone wants 10 to 15 storeys here, is that okay or not?” I just do not think that is an appropriate way to conduct our planning. I think we need to have some agreed vision—and I know that is really difficult to do—about what people think is reasonable.

On a human scale, it is probably up to three or four storeys. Once it gets up to that, you are starting to change the character of the city. I am not saying that you need to have more than six storeys. In such a constrained site, I think six storeys is pushing it a bit. On the Reid end, six storeys is probably okay, perhaps a little more on the Braddon end. There is a bit more space. You could have more setback.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming along and for your time this afternoon. Thank you also members of the public who have come here today. A copy of the transcript of today’s proceedings will be available on the committee’s web page in a few days time. A copy will be sent to today’s witnesses for checking any typographical or other transcription errors.

The committee’s next hearing will be on 22 May. Details will be made available on the Assembly’s website in due course.

The committee adjourned at 5.07 pm.