



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:
Cooyong Street urban renewal area](#))

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 22 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.

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Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 3.04 pm.

WARHURST, PROFESSOR JOHN, Executive committee member, body corporate, Argyle Square stage 1

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. I declare open this third public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services into draft variation to the territory plan 308: Cooyong Street urban renewal area. To provide a record, the hearing will be transcribed by Hansard. In addition, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly (Broadcasting) Act 2001, 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 witness to the table. I draw your attention to the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege, which are outlined on the pink-coloured privilege statement before you on the table. Could you please confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Prof Warhurst: I do, thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: The committee has taken a submission from the executive committee, body corporate, Argyle Square stage 1. The submission is No 7. Do you want to add to it or make any changes to that submission?

Prof Warhurst: No, I will leave that as it is.

THE CHAIR: I will pass over to you to make your opening statement, Professor Warhurst.

Prof Warhurst: I am the current chair of the owners corporation of stage 1, Argyle Square. I was one of those who made the submission. Since then I have been elected chair. I am a 20-year resident of Argyle Square. We are a 28-member body corporate bounded by Ainslie Avenue, Doonkuna Street and Allambee Street. We are a real community. It is medium density housing. Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you.

I will not go over or read very much from our submission to make the point that we are appalled by this development. I think we are even frightened by what is in store for us in the future if this proposed development goes ahead on the size and scale that is proposed. As we say in our submission, we think it is inappropriate in its context and outrageously intrusive on our homes and lives.

I should say that we certainly do not object to the development of the Reid site, and we are commenting particularly on the part of the redevelopment that is in Reid rather than in Braddon. We do not have anything directly to say about the Braddon development, although some of the points that we make would probably also apply.

We certainly do not object to the redevelopment; far from it. I think we think it needs

redeveloping or would benefit from it. But we do object to these proposals. We think they are unfair to neighbouring residents and I do not think that unfairness is recognised by those who have been responsible for drawing up these proposals.

We have met with the public servants involved and attended public hearings. It appears that it is not even a question of “on balance”. People realise the damage that is being done to Argyle Square but say, “Oh, well, for the greater good, this redevelopment has to go ahead.” I have never heard any admission that there is any damage to the nearby residents when we think there certainly is.

We think our residential amenity is being trampled over or at least given no consideration in the search for greater project yield, I think is the term, from this redevelopment. We have tried to make these points but it seems that no-one has been listening so far. When we make the points the revisions just seem to be higher and larger, which is going entirely in a different direction than we want to go.

We make five key points in our submission. I suspect you have covered much of this ground before. We are against the rezoning to commercial mixed from the current residential. I should say as I go that I am really appearing as an ordinary citizen. I do not have the grasp of the technical detail that I know some of my colleagues have and that you will have. But my understanding is that the redevelopment effectively means that Civic is crossing the main road into Reid effectively if you are going to have commercial mixed development unrestricted. Some might say that it is the thin edge of the wedge as far as the Reid suburb is concerned.

Secondly, we object to the height, the scale and the density of the project. I suppose I just see it as such an enormous redevelopment. I mentioned in the walk around Argyle Square that I look over at the Manhattan development, which we have pointed out to you all. It is in Civic and is a long way away. To try to bring home to us what this redevelopment might mean at its current scale, height and so on, it is effectively transplanting Manhattan, a building of that size, right across the other side of Kogarah Lane. I find that a very scary, disappointing proposition as far as Argyle Square is concerned.

We think it is certainly contrary to the existing character of Reid. I do not think there can be any argument about that. Coming from Argyle Square, some of the older residents of Reid might say, “You started it all 30 years ago when you brought in medium density.” But I think it is an enormous step up from the medium density of Argyle Square to this 15-storey, I think in part, proposal, which is proposed in this area. It is not only contrary to the existing character of Reid, but we think of this part of Canberra as a whole.

Thirdly, we have particular concerns about traffic flow and parking. We think a lot of this stems from the very narrow 5.8 metre width of Kogarah Lane, which is different, I believe, from the road that would be between Gorman House and the other part of the development across Ainslie Avenue. That would be our first point about traffic flow, that Kogarah Lane is very narrow. It is often blocked off. I know this from walking my dog. It is often blocked off with bigger trucks, removal vans and other sorts of big vans that come through. We think that is a particular characteristic that should be kept in mind.

We are also concerned about the number of additional cars that will be brought into the area by a 15-storey building that would not be catered for, as I understand it, within the parking provided by the developers. It would spill out right across our area in a way that is already a problem. We have explained to the committee that there is a shortage of car parking in this area as well.

Our fourth point related to the impact on residential amenity. With the massive high density, the towers, we think there is a major issue of, I suppose, visual spillover but also problems of reduction of privacy, the introduction of shading over parts of Argyle Square. It is not actually in my backyard. I pointed out that I actually live up near Doonkuna Street. However, it is certainly in the backyards and balconies of those Argyle Street residents who live closer to this proposed new development. We think it degrades the heritage value. We would include Argyle Square in the more modern heritage value of Reid. Finally, we make some points about tree retention. We also discussed trees on our walking around.

My conclusion would be that on behalf of the body corporate, we are certainly not opposed to development. We think that this as it stands is the wrong development. We think it is too big. We think it is too massive in its scale. We think it should be rethought. And we certainly think it should be downsized to preserve a number of the characteristics of the area and the rights of the existing neighbours and residents of this area. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Professor Warhurst. Are you happy to take some questions from the committee?

Prof Warhurst: Certainly; I will do my best.

DR BOURKE: We have had different opinions expressed in evidence by people around mixed development. One of the things that people talk about when they talk about the desirability of mixed use is that it provides a more lively streetscape, that it improves security and, as a result, more people move around during the daytime. How do you answer those particular thoughts?

Prof Warhurst: I can see the argument for some social and commercial developments. There was actually a shop in Argyle Square which operated when we moved into Argyle Square. I can see the benefit of some cafes for residents and people who perhaps walk to the area from nearby. I am pretty sceptical of the notion that this will improve the security of the area. Parts of this area are pretty insecure as it stands. You would not want to be hanging around parts of Ainslie Avenue or this area after dark without some pretty burly people with you. In one sense, the more the merrier—the more people who consider this their community and want to be part of it.

I do not think those points apply to the sorts of mixed-use development which properly should stay in the Civic area. The shops which would attract people from far and wide I think would only increase the parking and other problems and would not really help the amenity of the residents of this new development. We are only a stone's throw from all of the amenities of Civic. I do not think much is to be gained, other than perhaps a coffee shop or two or bringing in maybe an in-house gymnasium

and those sorts of things which could be part of the development and not operated on a commercial basis.

THE CHAIR: What do you think of the consultation process so far?

Prof Warhurst: There has been consultation. I think there was a real problem in communicating with local residents. There were some disagreements as to how many letter drops there were and that sort of thing. We put it to those conducting the consultation that they would be far better dealing with the executive committees of body corporates when they are dealing with the developments and leave it to them to spread the word among the occupants, remembering that many of the occupants are tenants and are probably—I do not want to generalise about tenants—less interested in getting involved in consultation about long-term developments which look like being 10 years in the future.

We made our thoughts plain in the early days that we did not think that the consultation and the communication had been adequate. Personally, I think those involved lifted their game as time went on and we were given access as a group to go and talk to public service officers. There were a number of public meetings around the area. I just think it is a difficult thing to get right at the best of times. We would be the first ones to say—or at least I would be the first one to say—that sometimes when you get a letter in your letterbox saying there is a development down the road you have got other things on your mind. There may be fault on both sides.

The more streamlined and the more efficient the consultation can be the better. As with all consultation, it is a sense that you are being listened to. It is not that people are not courteous, but we found that the revisions of the proposal did not seem to take into account the things we were saying. Ultimately, if you feel as though you are knocking your head against a brick wall then you give up after a while.

MR COE: Professor, I am keen to get your thoughts—and also the Reid Residents Association's thoughts—on living on the cusp of the city yet in a suburb which has had a pretty strong identity for many years. Do you see yourself as living in the city or is it a distinct residential feeling?

Prof Warhurst: I see myself as living on the edge of the city, the perimeter of the city. I would distinguish my circumstances from actually owning an apartment in a high-rise in the city. It seems to me that many of us get the benefit of being so close that you can go down to the supermarket in two minutes but at the same time preserving the circumstances of a near-city heritage suburb. Unlike some Reid residents, we are right on the edge where we are, in a sense, and we are part of a redevelopment 30 years ago. But we certainly do see ourselves as part of, and lucky to be part of, a beautiful heritage suburb. If Argyle Square is a bit of a barrier which helps the rest of the Reid suburb then I think that is a real plus—the more development of this sort that comes across the road in future. I think it is a bit of a creeping development. If you are going to make a break somewhere, surely the main road there is the place to draw the line. I am a near-city resident, not an inner city resident, if I can make that distinction.

MR COE: Secondly—this might be calling upon your professional life as opposed to

your residential life—what are your thoughts on the territory plan and, in particular, the process for changing the territory plan? The notion of authority or mandate to do that does not solely rest with the minister but it certainly does solely rest with the minister in terms of instigating a change. And then there is a disallowance option by the Assembly as opposed to an enabling option. What are your thoughts on that?

Prof Warhurst: As I see it, I am much less of an expert than some of my colleagues. We were very glad to think that we had the Assembly as a defence of last resort. That is how we saw it. We see the Assembly as more or less our last chance. I think that is the point you make about the Assembly—not as an enabler but a sort of veto option. Our worry is that it seems a long way down the track. A lot of work is being done and the momentum would be built up in a way that would make it hard for the Assembly to say it would disallow this particular project.

It is not quite answering your question, but I personally would much rather deal with members of the Assembly than the earlier bureaucratic and planning processes that we have had to go through so far over 18 months or so now, since the end of 2011. Please be as active as you can be in this process because we think you have the direct connection with citizens that those who have been involved in the process do not have. They have professional opinions about what would be best for the citizens of Reid and perhaps for the city as a whole. I cannot answer your specific question about changing the plan and so on, but I would like the Assembly to be involved as early as possible in this process. That is why we were so delighted to have this opportunity to try and put our case to you.

MR WALL: You mentioned that there was concern around the 15-storey elements of the building and the scale of the proposed development. What do you, as the voice of the body corporate, feel would be adequate development on that site?

Prof Warhurst: We all have our personal opinions but I might just say that the body corporate seeks a reduction in height to four storeys facing Kogarah Lane and a maximum of six storeys facing Cooyong Street. The submission also makes some comments about landmark corner buildings. As we walked around we pointed out the eight-story building across Ainslie Avenue. I think it was eight storey—the ABC flats. Personally, I think no higher than that. Our submission suggests a maximum lower height than eight. But that is the ballpark.

We have kicked it around. It is a bit hard to visualise it sometimes, but down in that six to eight maximum, which would be not right on facing Argyle Square, and certainly much less than that—four storey, which would be equivalent to Argyle Square—seems to be appropriate just across the road in Kogarah Lane and then going upwards towards Cooyong Street.

MR WALL: So you would not consider Argyle Square being part of the step down from the residential tiering up towards the city?

Prof Warhurst: In the sense that—what, be higher than the rest of Reid and then maybe it should go up—

MR WALL: Look at an incremental—

Prof Warhurst: Look at an incremental across the road?

MR WALL: Yes.

Prof Warhurst: I think that would be very hard on the Argyle Square residents that are situated right on Kogarah Lane. I would prefer not to go along with an immediate step up across Kogarah Lane. If it were the same height on the other side of Kogarah Lane and then stepped up, that would be a preferable development in our view—an ideal development in our view. We are faced with—there is a great difference between 15 storeys and eight. Sometimes we think any improvement would be good for us but we would certainly like to take it right down.

DR BOURKE: Yesterday we heard evidence from a witness who took particular exception to paragraph 4 of the submission regarding demographics and claims about a transient population that is going to be wanting to live in studio-study and one-bedroom study apartments. We had the statement that they would be a headache and not likely to be community proud. Do you have evidence to support those assertions in that paragraph?

Prof Warhurst: You are talking about paragraph 4—

DR BOURKE: On page 1 of the owners corporation, 202 Argyle Square. The introductory paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4. In particular, I am referring to the last three sentences of that paragraph.

Prof Warhurst: I personally do not have any evidence to support that claim made in that paragraph. It is probably best to leave it at that. We could offer to provide evidence or seek evidence. During the walk around—certainly in the body corporate most of the work falls on the live-in owners rather than tenants because of the nature of their shorter term living. Our part of Argyle Square attracts a lot of students who add certainly a different character to the complex and a positive character. But by and large they are not interested in the running of the complex or any long-term issues surrounding the complex. I will leave it at that, I think.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions, Professor Warhurst, thank you very much for your time this afternoon. A copy of the transcript of proceedings will be forwarded to you for any typographical errors to be corrected in the near future.

Prof Warhurst: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

Short suspension.

CARTER, MR GRAHAM, Secretary, Reid Residents Association
ALBURY-COLLESS, MS MARIANNE, Member, Reid Residents Association

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the planning committee's inquiry into draft variation 308. We earlier mentioned while you were in the audience the requirements of the privilege card there. Can you let us know that you understand those requirements?

Mr Carter: Yes.

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

Mr Carter: Yes, thank you, Mr Chairman. We obviously represent the Reid Residents Association, which was formed in 1944. It is one of Canberra's oldest community residents' organisations. Today we particularly want to make the point that we are making representations not as owners but as people and an organisation that has a genuine and a long-term interest in Canberra from a planning design point of view and from a community point of view. At the same time, individually and collectively, we are custodians of an area that is an asset to Canberra and that has a lot of—well, value is not quite the right word. It has a lot of significance for this city.

We are like the other people from Argyle Square in that we appreciate that the site needs to be redeveloped. It is there and we have no problems as far as that as a general issue is concerned. What we are concerned about is that the proposal, as we see it, is only going to provide poor planning outcomes and poor social outcomes. It is a lot more than just a couple of flats and a few buildings.

We have got major problems in terms of, again, the height, the size and the scale of the development. The development, as it has been put to us, is a fairly ordinary sort of thing. It is just a collection of multi-storey buildings. We think that Canberra deserves better. The ACT deserves better. This is a city that is well planned and well regarded. We do not think this is really adding to that status at all.

We think that it needs to be looked at in light of being an exemplar for residential development around a planned city and around a national capital. We do not think that is being achieved by the designs that are before us. It should be a model for best practice. It should be a model for innovation. It should be a model for creativity to join the residential areas into the actual CBD.

We also believe that it should be a place that provides a good quality of life and that people at the end of the day are happy. That means not just the residents of the buildings themselves but the residents of the wider area surrounding the buildings as they go up. We are concerned, on the basis of the current planning, that all we are really going to end up with is a collection of high-rise buildings that look very ordinary, do not do anything for the city but get maximum yield for the developer—in this case, Housing ACT. We are unlikely to end up with anything that is of a good design. We have major problems with that.

As a community organisation too, we are concerned about the fact that this is just one of a number of things that are going on around the suburb. If you take Reid as a

suburb, we are being bombarded. We started off with the development at the other end of Constitution Avenue, on section 5 down at Campbell. As a community organisation, we have been trying to respond to that in a sensible, informed and hopefully constructive sort of manner.

Then we have another exercise come along virtually at the same time, which is the Constitution redevelopment. We now have got this one going on around the other edge of the suburb. We are concerned that each of these things is going on independently. Within government there does not seem to be anyone connecting the dots and looking at it as a holistic sort of exercise.

At the same time, no-one is doing an aggregation in terms of residential impacts, parking, noise and what have you. Whenever we go to meetings and we say to whoever it might be that is the group that we are dealing with at the time, “What is happening here in a wider sense? Are you talking with this other group over there?”, we are not getting any sensible answers. It just makes it extremely difficult for us to be able to participate and contend with these sorts of issues.

I can come back to that again in a minute. Then at the same time, we now have the city to the lake exercise. There is a round of consultation going on with that. We have got now finally someone saying that we need to have a city plan, which we support. We are concerned that all of these things have been rambling along without any connection and without any overall planning at all.

Further to that at the same time we have had the proposal for the redevelopment of Braddon oval down the other end. We have concerns about that as well from an overall community point of view. Then most recently we have had the very fast train or the high speed rail thing come out and we have got people talking about putting a railway station in the middle of Ainslie Avenue. But there is no connection between any of those, and certainly no connection with the ABC flats redevelopment. We have a collection of concerns around those sorts of things.

As far as the rezoning exercise is concerned, we do not think that that is necessary. It could go ahead under the existing framework, from our lay perspective at least. We are concerned that this is going to create a whole new precinct which then straddles two suburbs. We are concerned at the same time that the exercise is likely to create a precedent where anyone could get a collection of blocks and say, “We want to form that as a precinct” and away we go. We are also concerned in that regard that the government is setting itself up to be in a situation where, on the one hand, it is a developer and, on the other hand, it is a planning and approval authority. So there is a little bit of a conflict as far as that is concerned in our eyes. Again, this is from a lay point of view.

I have mentioned the parking and the fact that no-one is adding up all of the impacts and trying to come up with what we would consider to be an overall cogent plan. The height of the buildings—again, like the people from Argyle Square—we have concerns about. We cannot see why it is necessary to put up 15-storey buildings in this type of location, particularly as we have gone through the exercise at the Campbell end. In consultation they have talked about heights up there and limiting it to eight storeys. Hence they also seem to have adopted a policy of eight storeys all the

way along Constitution Avenue. We believe that it is appropriate for the same height limit to swell around the eastern side of the city as well. We also note that, as far as the general area of Civic is concerned, it is no higher than eight storeys. There are a couple of exceptions, but as a general rule it is only up to eight storeys.

Each time you have questions about the adequacy of the consultation. We do not think the consultation has been at all adequate. Our members were not letterboxed through the exercise. There have been public meetings. Every time there has been a public meeting people have said, "Too big, too high." Each time there has been another plan brought back to the next round of meetings and it is no lower and in fact, by and large, it has been higher and bigger again. We have concerns about that.

With regard to the consultation, there was a public meeting for consultation, would you believe, held on the Friday before Christmas. How smart was that? By the same token, there were 100 people there at that meeting. There was only one person that spoke in favour of the development as it was proposed at that time. There were 90-odd people there who said they were not happy. There has been no change and basically everything that was said at that meeting seems to have been disregarded and life has just charged on ahead.

As far as the mix of the development is concerned, as we understand it, about 40-odd per cent of these new apartments are going to be one-bedroom and bedsitter-type units. You do not have to look too far into the future to see that that is likely to cause the sorts of social problems that we have already got over here at the moment. It is going to be lonely town and we really would not want to live there. There does not seem to be any regard to having a mix of residential-type accommodation over there. By that I mean it just seems to be a case of cram as many apartments in there as you possibly can and do not have any regard for things like older people accommodation, for example.

We raised this point in relation to Campbell. We said there are a lot of people in Campbell who are reaching the age where they might be happy to sell off and move into some sort of retirement-type accommodation. We asked whether that had been considered there and the answer was no, and it has not been considered here either. We should be looking for something which is a little bit creative and which looks at a mix. There is the example of the development over at Goodwin homes where they have four or five storeys or something like that. That is the sort of stuff that should be put in here as well.

The heritage side of things, to our mind, has not really been considered at all. There is some mention in all of these documents about the St Pat's church site and things like that. No-one, in any of the documentation, is saying that this stuff has an impact on the Braddon and the Reid heritage precincts from an architectural point of view and from a heritage point of view. We would like to think that some regard could be given to that. The precincts have important heritage aspects and that needs to be taken into proper account.

When the Argyle Square apartments were built they were sympathetic to the pre-existing area of the suburb. They were oriented differently. They were not the same style, obviously; they were a classic style, based on the existing area. There has been a

conservation management plan drafted for Reid since the early 1990s but it has never been enacted. We have been advocating all the way through that that should happen. We have now got to the stage, and you will notice it in the submission, where houses are being knocked down in Reid, apart from the front facade. We are concerned that this sort of project is likely to exacerbate the disappearance over a period of time of the whole precinct. We have concerns in that area as well.

Regarding the residential boundaries issue, we fully agree with what the previous witness was saying insofar as there needs to be a boundary. We have got the boundary there around the back of Civic. That should really be observed and it should also be observed so as to support the central area. We have already got traders struggling in the Sydney and Melbourne buildings, Garema Place and what have you. We do not need more shops on the other side of the road, thank you very much.

The pre-existing shop that was in Argyle Square did not survive for two reasons. Firstly, it did not have high turnover. Secondly, it was being knocked over—robbed—on a regular basis. So we believe that the city needs to end there and that that should be one of the findings of the committee.

We also have concerns about the supply of community facilities in the inner area of Canberra more broadly than just Reid and Braddon. It also applies to the other parts. In that document relating to this project, they talk a little about the supply of community facilities and say that there is a shortage there already. We are now talking about bringing another 15,000 to 20,000 people into this inner city area. There is no regard given to the existing supply of community facilities. By that, we mean community, sporting, recreation, social, child minding and all of those sorts of things.

This committee should be requiring a needs assessment of those sorts of things as part of this exercise, we believe. It needs to have something there that leads on to some proper implementation of whatever the findings of that needs assessment would be and also to keep it up to date thereafter.

I have mentioned earlier the fact that a recent announcement has been made about the high speed train and the new railway station. That to our mind is a little symptomatic of how disconnected planning has become in this town. We have people talking about high speed rail in Ainslie Avenue. We also have the plan for the light rail from Gungahlin to Civic. So far, there does not seem to be any strategy as to where it is going to go after Civic.

In the other consultation documents relating to city to the lake, in that regard there is a suggestion that the light rail should come down and around Vernon Circle, but no indication as to where it should go. We would think it makes some sense to connect the light rail with the high speed rail but do it down here in conjunction with the new stadium and convention centre.

If we are going to put Parkes Way partially underground, why don't you bring the light rail down around from the airport down around Parkes Way, connect it up there, connect it on to Gungahlin or whatever? You do not need to have a railway station underneath Ainslie Avenue and bring with that the other impacts that are likely to be generated.

You mentioned the effectiveness of consultation in a question to the previous witness. We would ask the question: is public consultation really meaningful? Through our experiences, we think that the overall coordination, as I said earlier, has not been connected. No-one is looking at aggregated impacts. We are now in a situation where we struggle as lay people. We are trying to make intelligent comments on all of these proposals and keep up with them. We find it difficult. But then the whole exercise has become too complex. We have too many plans. We have too many strategies. We have too many guidelines. We have too many now. We are going to have a capital city plan and we are now going to have these precinct plans as well.

This committee needs somehow to shake all of that up and try to put some sort of meaningful ruler through it and make it a little bit more sensible and easier for people to become engaged because red tape around planning and these sorts of proposals is getting too complex for us to be able to deal with in an intelligent sort of a way.

We would also request, as a by-product of this exercise, that the committee and the government consider some form of assistance to community organisations, whether they be community councils, residents' associations or whatever, so they are able to participate in these sorts of things. As I say, we are lay people; we are struggling with time and we are struggling with resources. That should be looked at. We would also suggest that this committee has a role as far as heritage is concerned. It should be looking at resourcing for other organisations, like the National Trust, which does not get any assistance from the government, apart from occasional grants. We have got all of those sorts of problems.

As part of that planning thing, I would also make the point that the existing DA process is loaded against existing residents. We have got no opportunities to understand what is going on. There is no public notification of any meaning anymore. We now have to play the role of auditor and checker of what is going on about the place or we get to the stage where something happens and we are the last people to know about it; we are pretty well disenfranchised from the whole exercise. I am sorry it was a bit of a ramble, but that is how it is.

THE CHAIR: Thanks very much, Mr Carter. Are you happy to take some questions from the committee?

Mr Carter: Yes.

DR BOURKE: In 1980 when the Argyle Square development went ahead, Reid residents were pretty loud and clear that they did not want it, they did not like it and they thought it would be detrimental to Reid. What do you think about that now?

Mr Carter: In 1980 I was not here and Marianne was not either, but I know what was being said at the time. It is there; it is a fact of life. In an ideal world, people probably still would not want it to be built today. But, by the same token, it has been done with some sympathy for the area and that is recognised and appreciated. As we said earlier, we are not opposed to this development either, but we need a better model than what is being proposed at the moment and a better design—not just from the point of view of those who live in Reid but from the point of view of the city more broadly.

Marianne?

Ms Albury-Colless: I did not come to Canberra until 1987, so Argyle was up. I guess I was a little surprised to see a Victorian set of high-rise buildings there in conjunction with the more federation style, in its true sense, of the Reid precinct. From an aesthetic point of view, I suppose it surprised me. I suppose it continues to surprise me because it is in between Gorman House and Reid and there is an architectural stylistic issue. But then, it is there. As Graham said, people love living there, so again it is a proximity thing. It seems to work well. The garden spaces et cetera all seem to be nicely laid out. I have good friends who live there and they certainly enjoy being there. I cannot cavil over the aesthetics because it is there to stay.

MR COE: On that issue broadly, the CIT building is not really consistent with houses in Reid. The ABC flats are not consistent with houses in Reid. I am sure the rector of St John's in 1920 or 1930 would have thought that the houses in Reid were not consistent with the rectory. There is, to an extent, going to be change in every suburb. The challenge is making it manageable and making it acceptable and appropriate. What would be appropriate, given the ABC flats are not consistent with the houses in Reid at present? What would the Reid Residents Association support if there is a presumption that redevelopment is going to occur?

Mr Carter: We have got no problems, as I said earlier, with redevelopment. That is part of the world and part of life. That is the way it is and we have not got any difficulty with it. You mentioned the word "appropriate". That is key to it. It needs to be appropriate, but at the same time, from an overall city perspective, it should be good quality, it should be best practice and it should be a lot better than is being proposed at the moment.

This city, as we all know, started out of a design competition with its roots. We are now 100 years down the track. Rather than just launching into this and whacking up however many blocks of multistorey units, the same as we have got in any other city in the world, why does this committee not take it back and say, "We are looking for good community outcomes, social outcomes and design outcomes"? Have a proper competition or something like that to get an appropriate solution to it. We cannot be specific and give you the answer because we do not know any more than you. But there has got to be a better route than what is being proposed at the moment.

We would also make the point, which is something I should have said earlier, that this side of the city is different to the western side. That was basically a greenfield site from a development point of view. You only had the Lakeside Hotel and the ANU over there. There were no pre-existing residential areas over there. There is a higher degree of transient-type people over there naturally through the ANU, the students and what have you. Over this side there are already residential areas, a garden city type of design, aesthetics and what have you. So fundamentally that is the case, but by the same token it is not being acknowledged in any of these and appropriately treated in any part of this design exercise. Let us look for good outcomes.

Ms Albury-Colless: I think, gentlemen, that you have got a big responsibility, and I see that. But we are looking at an east-west rib—I may not have the right architectural town planning term for it—on the northern side of the perimeter of the city. To me,

Canberra is our national capital and it has an international reputation. I think this is the most wonderful opportunity to do something that we can be proud of in 50 years time and 100 years time. This is a very valuable, fantastic space. All of the uses that the government can see could be fulfilled by, as Graham was saying, careful integration of the planning process and a much greater and more encompassing vision for that particular area.

As I said, I think this committee has got a big responsibility. I would like for all my grandchildren to enjoy that and say, "Look at that; that's fantastic." It is a barrier. I have heard some people saying that what is projected is possibly going to be called the great wall of Canberra. I have seen the Great Wall of China. Yes, it has its ups and downs and it forms a very important part of the heritage of China, but I think it has been used pejoratively. I would hate to see that side of Canberra being referred to as that when it has so much more that could happen there, something much more exciting and much more creative. A much better outcome could be envisaged with a bit of vision, and a fair bit of work.

Mr Carter: Just one further point on that: we cannot do it. At the moment we do not see anyone in the government that can do it, and I mean join the dots and bring all of this stuff together. ACTPLA seems to be unwilling to get involved and take an overall role in this exercise. It is up to you people to make sure that the dots are connected between the city to the lake exercise, the city plan, this one—you mentioned the CIT; that is going to be up for renewal for redevelopment at some point in the not-too-distant future, I would assume—and the other development that is going on at Constitution Avenue, Campbell and what have you. If you people do not grab all of this and say, "Let's get all of this sorted out properly," who will?

DR BOURKE: There is a growing demand in Canberra and Australia, and also across the world, for small household, single person accommodation. This is a fact and it is a national and international trend. One of the desires for people as they age, and often alone, is to live close to a city centre so that they can—as many people from Argyle Square have told us—obviate or minimise the use of a car. I often talk to older people who no longer feel comfortable driving at night or during heavy traffic. How do you see that demand and demographic change which is happening in our community being addressed in developments where there are not a sufficient number of single-room apartments?

Mr Carter: Again, we cannot give you the absolute solution to those sorts of things. By the same token, we do not disagree with what you are saying. What we are saying is that this is not providing us with the answers to those sorts of questions. There needs to be greater research and greater thought. In terms of these documents, parking is a case in point. There is some fantasy stuff in here. They are talking about supplying less than, as I understand it, the current yardstick in terms of the ratios for parking places. They are saying we can get away with less. They are also saying that the existing supply of parking to enable that to happen, for people who want to use cars, is included in their numbers—the car parking areas opposite the CIT and car park areas around the pool, both of which over a period of time are going to evaporate. They are saying that people's visitors can then use the pay parking across the road in the Canberra Centre.

That is all very well and good, but if they were your visitors who came round to your apartment on a Sunday afternoon for a cup of coffee and had to pay 10 bucks a day or afternoon for the parking, you are not going to have too many people coming back a second time around and you are certainly not going to have people coming to your apartment over here, having parked their car down at the pool or at the CIT car park. There needs to be greater thought and greater research and a better solution provided to that.

Ms Albury-Colless: I completely agree. You are talking about the physicality of older people and their requirements. I think Graham has already mentioned a needs assessment. I would add to that. If we are looking at turning that precinct—whatever it might be called; the rib—into what you might call an urban village then we ought to have people who have got strong sociological backgrounds who can understand social anthropology and psychology. I think we ought to think about getting some of those people to try and think not only about the physicality but also the wellbeing of those people who are going to be living in those areas.

Mr Carter: Another thing which this committee needs to think about is where the government is getting its advice from. There appears to be almost a conflict of interest between this project being serviced by a consultant who appears for the government in this regard and then appears for the proponent for the Braddon oval redevelopment. Surely there is a better supply of people out there that can give us good advice; people should not be running with the hounds and the others at the same time.

THE CHAIR: Mr Carter, would you feel any differently in terms of the way this proposal has gone ahead if it was a private development rather than a government proposal? Do you see any difference?

Mr Carter: No, because effectively from our side of the fence it appears it is being put forward by a private developer, which is housing. They are just driving this whole exercise for maximum return, squeezing as many apartments out and making as big a buck as they can out of the exercise.

DR BOURKE: A maximum return to who?

Mr Carter: ACT housing.

DR BOURKE: Who is?

Mr Carter: The ACT government.

DR BOURKE: Or the community, isn't it?

Mr Carter: Yes, but they are acting like a private developer rather than having that wider view of a good design outcome for the city and a good social solution for the outcome of the city.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Carter and Ms Albury-Colless, for your appearance here this afternoon. Once the transcript of this is up and ready, we will send that to you for any possible corrections. This hearing is now adjourned.

Evidence was then taken in camera.

The public hearing adjourned at 4.06 pm.