



Mr Andrew Smith
Chair of Intergovernmental Committee on Parking
email: parking@natcap.gov.au

Dear Mr Smith

Please find attached a submission on Parking in the Parliamentary Zone (Parkes), Barton and Russell prepared by the Inner South Canberra Community Council.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Gary Kent
Acting Chairperson

17 December 2010

Submission

***Parking in the Parliamentary Zone (Parkes),
Barton and Russell***

Inner South Canberra Community Council

December 2010

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
ISSUES	4
1.1 The study area	4
1.2 Impact on residents	4
1.3 Pedestrian movements	5
1.4 Heritage	5
1.5 The urban forest	6
1.6 Working hours and children.....	6
SOLUTIONS	7
2.1 Introduce paid parking	7
Visitors to national institutions	8
Bus users	8
2.2 Enforce parking rules	8
2.3 Better targeted transport services	8
2.4 Provide parking permits for residents, national institution volunteers and researchers, and construction workers	9
2.5 Provide services that would reduce car journeys in and out of the study area	10
2.6 Impacts of future developments	10
2.7 Encourage use of unused parking spaces	11
2.8 Provide a high quality network of safe commuting pathways that links the study area with major commuter residential areas and nearby transport nodes	11
2.9 Develop a workable resourcing agreement between the ACT and Commonwealth governments	11
Flow on effects.....	11
SUMMARY	12

INTRODUCTION

The Inner South Canberra Community Council is pleased to have the opportunity to make this submission.

The Council thanks the National Capital Authority for providing the basis for sensible debate through its Discussion Paper, public forums and on its internet site. The tone of NCA contribution has been balanced and reasonable, acknowledging the many valid but not necessarily compatible views.

The Council is making this submission after having been approached on this matter by local residents and considering relevant issues at some length.

In particular, the Council wishes the Committee to note that there were 940 residents in Barton alone at the time of the 2006 Census and, with the significant amount of residential development underway in that suburb; its population should reach at least 1,500 by 2011, notwithstanding future residential development. Therefore the impact of the parking situation and of proposed solutions for residents should be acknowledged and taken into account in this exercise.

The number of people living in Barton and the nearby study area, which includes parts of Forrest, now include those in:

- The Realm apartments
- Barton Court (heritage)
- The National
- Macquarie Court
- The Landmark
- Barton Housing Precinct (heritage)
- The Wesleyan Church – several residences in grounds
- St Andrew Church manse
- St Mark's (possibly some residential).

The ACT Government should also acknowledge that the parking problems in the study area are not unique. As a result of urban infill and night time entertainment there is increasing parking pressure in Kingston, Manuka, Deakin and parts of Yarralumla. A broad strategy is needed for the planning and management of parking issues in the Canberra's inner south.

This submission is in two parts:

1. Issues
2. Solutions

ISSUES

1.1 The study area

The inclusion of parts of Forrest is sensible as the parking situation in Barton impacts on a wide residential area. However, there are some odd exclusions to the study area, particularly parts of Barton, including the heritage listed Telopea Park, Bowen Park, most of the heritage listed Barton Housing Precinct and the Telopea Park School. The parking problems affect all of these areas.

The exclusion of these areas means that several parking areas have not been included in the analysis:

- around the edge of Telopea Park School grounds (where cars park on the nature strip on top of the root zones of historic regulated trees, compacting the roots and shortening their lives);
- on-street parking in the Barton Housing Precinct;
- Telopea Park (several graveled parking areas have encroached on this heritage listed park);
- Barton Tennis Club car park (private); and
- Bowen Park (reducing parking available to recreational users).

1.2 Impact on residents

While the discussion paper notes the existence of residential land use in Barton, there is nothing in it about the impacts of the parking situation on residents. Residents experience a number of problems due to the parking habits of office and construction workers and poor enforcement, including:

- Obstruction of driveways which make entry and exit dangerous (even legal parking often obscures vision for drivers reversing out of driveways, especially when larger construction vehicles are parked right next to driveways);
- Obstructions of intersections by parking on corners or too close to the intersection, obscuring views and making them hazardous to negotiate. Large construction vehicles are a particular concern;
- Illegal parking on the nature strips/ verges which residents are responsible to maintain, including on the root zones of regulated trees; and
- Office and construction workers parking in the visitor parking areas of apartments.

On top of this increasingly difficult situation a number of other factors significantly aggravate the problems including:

- School drop off and pick up;
- Construction sites where large numbers of workers are employed, such as at The Realm (they compete with the school drop off parents and office workers for limited on street parking); and

- Special events at Manuka Oval such as the Prime Minister’s XI and AFL matches (parking enforcement has not prevented patrons parking illegally on nature strips).

These aggravating factors need to be taken into account in planning for parking provision as they almost always result in increased illegal or “informal” parking (whatever that means if it’s not illegal!).

While land values in the area, and therefore rates, are very high, parking problems adversely affect residential amenity and could reduce land values (and income from rates). The persistence of these problems could potentially decrease the desirability of Barton as a place to live and negatively impact the ACT Government’s urban infill policy.

Accommodation establishments and clubs are also affected and these include:

- The Realm Hotel
- Brassey Hotel (heritage)
- Hotel Kurrajong (heritage)
- Rydges Capital Hill
- National Press Club
- ACT Rugby Union Club.

The lack of parking makes it difficult to attract out-of-area patrons such as for conferences, corporate training and meetings.

Some private businesses are also suffering from the parking situation. They need to remain so as to provide services to people working in the area.

1.3 Pedestrian movements

The dynamics discussed in the discussion paper are narrowly focused. There is significant pedestrian traffic to and from Kingston and Barton at lunch time that should be encouraged (for example, better walkways and crossings). Many people who live in Kingston, Forrest and Griffith walk to work in Barton.

It is an overstatement that everybody has to travel by car at lunch time. Walking to Kingston or Manuka means a hard won park need not be relinquished. Nevertheless more retail, government and other services need to be provided to the 22,600 people (2006 Census) who work in the Parliamentary Triangle, Barton and Russell to avoid the need to travel elsewhere.

1.4 Heritage

The chronic state of parking in the study area significantly degrades the heritage landscape and buildings.

The study needs to acknowledge that there are many more heritage sites and landscapes in the study than the important Parliamentary Vista. These sites include:

- Walter Burley Griffin’s central area heritage street layout
- Old Parliament House and its rose gardens
- The National Rose Gardens

- The National Archives building (East Block/ Secretariat No.1)
- West Block
- Edmund Barton Building
- The old Patent's Office
- Hotel Kurrajong
- York Park (its remnants)
- Telopea Park
- Barton Housing Precinct
- Barton Court
- Brasseley House

Most of the buildings were designed, placed in park-like settings and built under John Sulman's supervision – the man responsible for the Garden City nature of the inner south. And then of course there are Thomas Weston's fabulous tree plantings and those of his successors. This heritage landscape setting and the many heritage buildings and sites form a vital part of Canberra's appeal to tourists and generates significant income for the local economy. Parking problems reduce the tourist potential of this important national area by impeding access and creating visual eyesores. Lack of parking also reduces the revenue earning capacity of cultural institutions. This situation appears contrary to the National Capital Plan which seeks to have "public facilities that are accessible and affordable".

1.5 The urban forest

The study area and the rest of Barton have a very significant number of mature trees planted by Thomas Weston and his successors. They are valuable assets that currently present significant management problems, notwithstanding the impact on them of unregulated parking.

While most of these trees would be classified as regulated by the ACT Government, poor parking enforcement is eroding the value and life span of these trees. Pressure on parking has resulted in people parking their vehicles on nature strips thus damaging tree root zones. It seems a false economy not to enforce the law on parking on nature strips and verges if, as a result, the costly replacement of these trees is bought forward by decades. An example of this is on New South Wales Crescent where illegal parking is explicitly tolerated around the Telopea Park School grounds, contrary to road transport legislation (Reference: TAMS advice in The Canberra Times of 26/9/2010 was that 'under the Australian Road Rules and ACT road transport legislation it is an offence to park on or across...nature strips adjacent to a length of road in built up areas.')

Verge management plans need to be upgraded and enforced.

1.6 Working hours and children

Comments on the NCA website in response to the Intergovernmental Committee on Parking discussion paper make it very clear that (in common with other parts of Canberra) many people working in the study area work long hours extending well beyond current public transport peak period services and/or also have responsibility to deliver and pick up children from child care or school. Adequate provision must be made for them so they do not become part of the problem

(for example, chaotic school pick up traffic around Telopea Park School) or are disadvantaged by lack of parking available after school drop off times.

SOLUTIONS

The parking situation is the result of a complex set of causes and has many symptoms. It is extremely unlikely that a single solution would be effective. Different areas need different packages of solutions since their problems have common elements and some unique aspects.

Integrated solutions could involve packages of measures that can be drawn from the following menu (at least):

- Introduce paid parking;
- Enforce parking restrictions more comprehensively;
- Provide parking permits where certain people require access such as residents and their guests, volunteers at national institutions, researchers and construction workers;
- Provide better transport services;
- Provide government, retail and other services that would reduce the number of car journeys;
- Independently, more carefully and accurately assess the parking and traffic impacts of future developments;
- Strongly encourage public access to unused parking (and discourage its non-use);
- A well marked pedestrian crossing near the bus stop on the western side of National Circuit opposite the Realm Hotel which would provide a reasonably safe crossing for school children in particular; and
- Provide a high quality network of safe commuting and recreational pathways that link the study area with major commuter residential areas and nearby transport nodes;
- Develop a workable resourcing agreement between the Commonwealth and the ACT.

2.1 Introduce paid parking

This would likely be an unpopular element of any package but there seems little choice now given that there is a new mix of free and paid parking in the area, particularly in Barton. The introduction of paid parking in Section 9 of Barton (previously free) by the new owners has simply motivated parkers to cram into remaining areas of free parking, increasing an already chaotic situation – presumably not the objective intended. Now the genie has been let out of the bottle by the Department of Finance and Deregulation (which sold Section 9) there is no going back – it has forced the issue. Further commercially owned paid parking is planned for section 22, Barton, potentially bringing Parliamentarians and their staff into the FBT net.

As additional sites currently used for public parking are inevitably built on and the parking provided restricted to people working in those buildings, the situation for others (tourists, visitors, out of area meeting attendees, residents, trades people etc) will become increasingly chronic.

Commercially owned parking is problematic if parking revenues need to be ploughed back in the provision of much needed services in the area, designed to reduce the frequency of car journeys. If parking is not publicly owned, other funding sources are needed, especially for services the commercial sector is unlikely to provide such as a full service post office.

Visitors to national institutions

There is a strong argument that people visiting Australia's national institutions should be provided with parking that is easily accessible and free.

If this parking were free it needs to be quarantined for visitors use only and not taken up by office workers. Parking ticket validation has loopholes that currently allow its abuse. One possible solution is to require a minimum certified stay in the institution of 30 minutes.

Visitors to these national institutions could be issued with a (date & time specific) ticket to be displayed in their vehicle for the duration of their visit.

Bus users

Bus users are already discriminated against because they pay bus fares equal to about a full day's commercial parking fee whereas car drivers mostly pay no parking fees in the study area.

Bus users need incentives to make using the service competitive such as cheaper costs and shorter travel time than cars.

In addition, bus "shelters" need to be clearly identified, maintained and well lit after hours.

2.2 Enforce parking rules

More rigorous and frequent enforcement is required as part of any package of measures to address parking supply issues in the affected suburbs. However, increased enforcement will be unpopular unless accompanied by measures to improve non-car transport to and from the area and better manage existing parking.

Parking enforcement appears deliberately lax when significant building and construction work is underway in the area and may need more explicit management than the apparent turning of a blind eye to infringements, including environmental damage.

Enforcement is also inadequate and needs to be resourced when major events are held at Manuka Oval.

2.3 Better targeted transport services

Web comments suggest public and employer provided transport (buses, public bicycle banks, employer provided vehicles etc) is a key element of any package of solutions and needs to be addressed early on. Solutions must be tailored to cater for where commuters originate and the

hours they work. Most appear to originate from Belconnen and Tuggeranong which are not within easy cycling or walking distance.

Improved public transport must be provided as part of an integrated package of measures which include some 'carrot' and some 'stick'.

Some public transport options for consideration are:

- park and ride facilities at Belconnen and Tuggeranong (which are major source areas for study area commuters) and other identified locations (eg behind the Old Bus depot at Kingston;
- extended peak hour bus services to cater for people who work late in the study area;
- introduce cheaper family-friendly bus fares to encourage use by families;
- implement a bicycle bank so people working in the area could get around it and also to Kingston and Manuka more easily. Improve connection of cycle ways to major destinations in the area to facilitate their use;
- shuttle busses to Kingston, Manuka and Civic, similar to the shuttle service provided by Department of Defense at Russell; and
- employers to provide office vehicles or taxis for work travel especially if late at night or early morning (cheaper than providing busses).

A sweetener would be to reinvest parking fines and fees in services for the area such as an ACT Government shop front and a full service post office (which would reduce the need to drive out of the area at lunch time).

The introduction of bicycle banks (helmets provided) as in London and Paris could be useful, if accompanied to improvements to the network of cycle ways within the area and linking to popular lunch time destinations as well as commuter origins. Many pathways are very narrow and there is not room for safe use by significant numbers of cyclists and pedestrians. The provision of additional showering facilities could also assist increased uptake of cycling.

Please acknowledge that walking or cycling is not an option for people with disabilities, the aged and frail.

2.4 Provide parking permits for residents, national institution volunteers and researchers, and construction workers

Even if there are no changes to the proportions of free and paid parking, permits would be a useful tool for parking management. Many major cities use them including Sydney.

There are strong arguments to provide free parking for residents and their guests, volunteers and researchers at national institutions and this could be provided through a permit system or parking ticket validation.

Construction workers could also be issued with temporary permits to park in designated areas during building construction. Again, this provides a mechanism to better manage construction parking and minimize its impact.

2.5 Provide services that would reduce car journeys in and out of the study area

If the study area was a ‘normal’ employment hub, it would have a much greater range of services provided, recognizing the need of office workers. At June 2006 there were 22,600 people working in the study area – nearly as many as in Belconnen and Woden combined. The number working south of the lake was 16,600. In any other area it would be considered scandalous that the needs of the working population were so poorly catered for. Even Fyshwick, which had few services a decade ago, now has more services than the study area.

The provision of at least a neighborhood centre level of government and private services in the Barton area could help reduce car usage. Exactly which services would achieve reduced car journeys can be determined by asking the people who work in the area. Their answers might include:

- ACT Government shop front
- Full service Post Office (including bill payment facilities)
- Banks and bank- owned ATMs
- Mini market
- Cafes
- Pharmacist
- Child care
- Dry cleaning services.

Some of these services would need to be provided by government otherwise they would not be provided at all. More is needed than simply a plan which allows these services to be provided if the developer wishes (as is the case with Section 9, Barton) – they need to be made mandatory in development approvals.

Some businesses have been forced to relocate from Barton because of lack of customer parking. For example, a financial planning business recently moved to the airport. Retention of a broad range of businesses is essential so services are available in the area and car trips reduced.

2.6 Impacts of future developments

Independent, objective and arms’ length substantive analyses of parking and traffic impacts are needed for all proposed developments, including those by the Commonwealth government. They should address specific questions, use approved methodologies and relate in detail to a master traffic management plan for the area. By independent we mean not commissioned by the developer as this creates a clear conflict of interest for the provider of the analysis to minimize possible negative impacts.

There are several major developments in the pipeline for Barton and Forrest including One Canberra Avenue, Evolve (the old Telopea Park Inn) and possibly the AFP College (formerly Lawley House hostel). These must be planned for and managed.

2.7 Encourage use of unused parking spaces

There would be enough parking in Barton if all privately controlled spaces were used, some of which are government owned and operated. However a significant number are not used or available creating some surprising contrasts of chaotic parking with empty or underutilized parks.

Measures to ‘encourage’ the use of this parking could include a tax on unused private parking spaces and encouragement to rent them out to the general public and government agencies. This would work if most parking in the area was paid and fees were set at a rate that owners of private spaces would find attractive (especially if a tax would be avoided).

2.8 Provide a high quality network of safe commuting pathways that links the study area with major commuter residential areas and nearby transport nodes

Some parts of the National Area have excellent pathways suitable for safe multi-modal transport (fast commuter bicycles and slower pedestrians), for example the RG Menzies walk. However, elsewhere the pathways are narrow and dangerous when pedestrians mix with fast commuter traffic.

Links from Russell to Civic bus interchange are poor, as are links between Barton and Parkes with the Kingston and Manuka shops.

The network of bicycle commuting pathways in the study area requires attention, especially where it merges with busy areas of recreational traffic.

In Barton, many of the narrow foot paths are well used by pedestrians but they often have no gutter ramps and are too narrow for multi-mode use.

2.9 Develop a workable resourcing agreement between the ACT and Commonwealth governments

It goes without saying that the best plans are a waste of time, money and effort if not resourced and implemented. Political and bureaucratic will to achieve a positive outcome is required and this is expected by the many people who commented on the discussion paper, mostly on-line.

In times of budgetary restraint both the ACT and Commonwealth governments are likely to seek to minimize their financial contributions. While welcoming fiscal constraint, both governments need to resource solutions. Using revenue from parking fines and fees would be very good start.

Flow on effects

The study needs to consider the flow on effects of the possible solutions, especially those which have the potential to push current problems out to surrounding areas, including residential areas such as Campbell, Forrest, Griffiths, Yarralumla and Barton. These areas also have parking

issues resulting from other factors such as urban infill and night time entertainment and are not well placed to absorb parking demand pushed out of the study area.

SUMMARY

It is encouraging to see a joint Commonwealth and ACT Government approach to this problem even though the problem has been addressed before with no action resulting. Please keep the political goodwill to work out and implement practical and effective solutions. Many people will be gravely disappointed if this exercise provides no useful solutions for all the effort involved.

Our submission emphasizes that:

1. residents of the study area and nearby are also suffering the consequences of the parking situation. Their views and needs should be addressed;
2. there is far more heritage in the area than just the Parliamentary Vista. The parking situation is degrading the heritage values in the area;
3. The urban forest is a valuable asset that is being degraded, at significant cost, by illegal parking;
4. A package of solutions is needed the most important elements of which are paid parking, parking enforcement, improved non-car transport options and the provision of services appropriate to such a large employment hub; and
5. the ACT Government's interest needs to be wider than just transport strategy. This matter impacts on ACT residents living in the area, the heritage management, the urban forest and the impact of urban infill. Parking issues also arise in several inner south areas such as Kingston, Manuka, Deakin and parts of Yarralumla. The Inner South Canberra Community Council will be closely monitoring the broader situation.

Inner South Canberra Community Council

December 2010