

Inner south residents question plan to bring Telopea Park under ACT control

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An artist's impression of development at City Hill and West Basin, from the draft new National Capital Plan. *Photo: Supplied*

The National Capital Authority plans to hand over control of Telopea Park and Haig Park to the ACT government, along with the swathe of land west of Tuggeranong, Gold Creek and Harcourt Hill, and Namadgi National Park.

The proposal is part of the new National Capital Plan, on which submissions closed this week.

The plan contains detailed guidelines for the development of City Hill, including six to eight storey buildings ringing Vernon Circle around City Hill - plans which are vehemently opposed by the Lake Burley Griffin Guardians group.

The National Capital Authority's proposal to cede planning control over significant parts of the city to the ACT Government has been [pushed by Liberal Senator Zed Seselja](#) , who wants to see residential development across the Murrumbidgee west of Tuggeranong.

The draft National Capital Plan identifies a large area between Tuggeranong and the Tidbinbilla nature reserve as potentially suitable for urban development, along with land either side of the new Majura Parkway north and south of the airport, and land near Oaks Estate.

But planning control would move to the ACT. The authority said shifting Haig and Telopea parks, the Lanyon bowl, the Murrumbidgee and Molonglo River corridors, Namadgi, and Gold Creek and Harcourt Hill to territory control would reduce complexity in planning.

But the Inner South Community Council which says the authority has more streamlined and effective planning processes.

"A small, elected Assembly, with a myriad of local political and economic pressures, is not well-placed to guard the national interest in the planning and development of the ACT," chairman Gary Kent said in a submission to the authority. The authority had not explained why it was necessary to cede control of the historic and iconic Telopea Park, he said.

The council was also concerned about what the ACT would do with the land west of Tuggeranong, pointing to [comments from architect David Flannery](#), now chairman of the Heritage Council, who described housing development in the area as senseless urban sprawl that would have "zero impact on revitalising the Tuggeranong town centre" and put more cars on the road.

In its submission, the Lake Burley Griffin Guardians said the City Hill guidelines would destroy the apex of the national triangle.

Similar to its current National Capital Plan, the National Capital Authority envisages buildings up to 25 metres (six to eight storeys) on Vernon Circle and the roads that radiate off, including Commonwealth Avenue, which is set for major redevelopment. The buildings fronting Vernon Circle should have a minimum height of four storeys "to create a sense of enclosure around City Hill Park", it says.

The topography of the park might need to be modified to improve pedestrian use, and the public buildings beside Vernon Circle could be reconfigured to face the park.

The authority says buildings higher still, at 14 to 18 storeys, can be built on the corners of the major avenues, including Commonwealth Avenue and London Circuit.

But Lake Burley Griffin Guardians convenor Juliet Ramsay and three others in the group wrote to the authority, saying 14 to 18 storey buildings would mean "the complete destruction of City Hill as a landmark icon of the Griffin geometry".

The buildings around Vernon Circle would be above the tree height, and "a travesty being forced on central Canberra". "Why is a sense of enclosing and hiding the City Hill park desired?" they asked.

The group also criticised West Basin plans, saying the proposed apartments and businesses were too extensive and too high.

"It is a gift to apartment dwellers and a great loss to the public and future public recreation use."

The National Capital Plan says Vernon Circle should be limited to local and ceremonial traffic, with London Circuit becoming the main traffic route. And it shows Marcus Clarke Street extended past New Acton over a lowered Parkes Way to a new ferry terminus on the lake.