



NATIONAL TRUST

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PATRON: The Hon Margaret Reid AO

Mr Andrew Smith
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cc

- North Canberra Community Council
- Director-General EPSDD

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLAN DRAFT AMENDMENT 93 – CITY AND GATEWAY URBAN DESIGN PROVISIONS (TECHNICAL CHANGES)

Dear Mr Smith

We refer to our recent meeting about the Draft Amendment and welcome the opportunity to provide comment.

The National Trust of Australia (ACT) is a not for profit community organisation with some 1,700 members and is widely respected in the community. The Trust's role is to foster public knowledge about places and objects that are significant to our heritage, and promote their conservation.

Issue: Conservation of the Black Mountain vista along Majura Avenue

The Trust is supportive of the proposed technical changes to the earlier amendment 91 and proposes that an additional set of words be inserted to address what we believe is an unintended and undesirable consequence of the newly amended building heights at the Northbourne/Macarthur-Wakefield intersection.

The two supplementary attachments outline the basis and rationale for our concerns on heritage grounds relating to new and enlarged building envelopes on two of the four corners of this intersection. These sites as you know are centrally located within the Griffins' original northernmost axis (the axial line spans almost 9 km between the summits of Mt Majura and Black Mountain, traversing the valley diagonally). Unlike many other attractive views, the Majura Avenue vista is framed by a continuous planting of oaks for several kilometres, which complement and form a symmetrical V-shaped opening that gradually opens up as the viewer moves southwest along the corridor. The V shape rises and expands from the centre of the view corridor to the upper flanks and ridge of Black Mountain, is centred on the vertical sculptural element of Telstra Tower, and opens upward and outward to embrace the sky. This dramatic landscape vista constitutes a superb public asset, and derives directly from the Griffins' original 1912 Plan.

Impairing the capacity for future generations to enjoy and appreciate this iconic landscape vista and the legibility it provides in terms of sense of place and the primacy of natural landscape dating back to the Griffin Plan would in our opinion be an unacceptable loss to the community, present and future. We therefore urge the NCA to review the modelling we have provided, and examine practical ways to ensure that any future building envelopes on the Dickson ABC and Turner Mantra sites are designed sympathetically with regard to the Griffins' landscape vista and the strong axial line that Majura Avenue gives expression to.

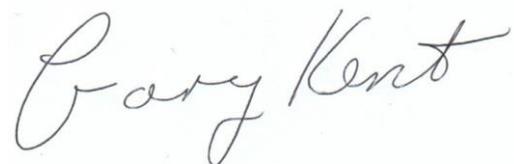
Practical solutions

Safeguarding the Majura Avenue vista for future generations depends on either one or two planning interventions. It could be done through a complex set of building envelope controls affecting the two Northbourne sites directly inside the view corridor, or via language contained in the City and Gateway building envelope provisions that picks up the importance of framing and complementing the vista as seen from specified vantage points on Majura Avenue. We would maintain that the Cowper Street intersection with Majura Avenue is an especially important vantage point given its function in the road network, its relationship to the Dickson group centre and Ainslie local centre, and the traffic volumes (both pedestrian and vehicular) that use it daily.

There are pros and cons associated with specifying prescriptive building envelope controls. Describing the significant value of the vista from Majura Avenue to Black Mountain in terms of heritage and urban design, and encouraging development proposals to ensure that the essential features of the vista are retained and where possible enhanced requires a set of words that offer flexibility and creative design responses yet have sufficient statutory backing to enforce.

We very much appreciate that the NCA is reviewing the modelling. Over the next few weeks we will be examining possible wording, looking at examples being used in other jurisdictions, and preparing a draft. We therefore seek leave to continue this dialogue with the NCA in partnership with North Canberra Community Council.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Kent". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

Gary Kent
President

4 September 2019