

ACT and Region Annual Australian Heritage Partnership Symposium 2013

'A Centenary of Celebrating Heritage'

The Centenary of Canberra – 2013

20 July 2013

Nominating Canberra for National Heritage Listing

Ed Wensing FPIA¹²

Abstract

Australia is one of the world's oldest modern democracies. The Federation formed by the six disparate States and established by Australia's Constitution in 1901, also created the National Capital. Canberra is the city that Federation created and Australia's only fully planned city. It is one of a few of the world's capital cities that were designated as such before they were created.

In 2009, the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Peter Garrett, invited nominations for entry on Australia's National Heritage List under the theme of 'Australian Democracy'.

It was in response to this invitation that seven professional and generally like-minded people got together and nominated Canberra to be entered on the National Heritage List. The seven people were: Associate Professor Dianne Firth, Romaldo Giurgola AO, David Headon, Stuart Mackenzie, Associate Professor Graham Sansom, Greg Wood and Ed Wensing.³

Canberra's unique design and planning over the past one hundred years embodies many of the ideas and messages incorporated in the theme of Australian Democracy. We nominated virtually the whole of the ACT (with some notable exceptions), and identified many features and elements that could easily satisfy at most of the criteria for National Heritage Listing.

This presentation will elaborate on the values for which Canberra can be entered on the National Heritage List. These are my personal views and do not necessarily reflect the views of my fellow nominees.

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³ A separate nomination for parts of Canberra to be entered in the National Heritage List was also made by Professor Ken Taylor.

Nominating Canberra for National Heritage Listing

SLIDE 1 (Cover)

SLIDE 2 (Picture)

Introduction

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In 2009, the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Peter Garrett, invited nominations for entry on Australia's National Heritage List under the theme of 'Australian Democracy'.

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This paper briefly outlines the nomination process, discusses one of the nominations for entering Canberra's planning history and heritage on the National Heritage List, and discusses the values for which the place was nominated for entry on the List and identifies its significant features.

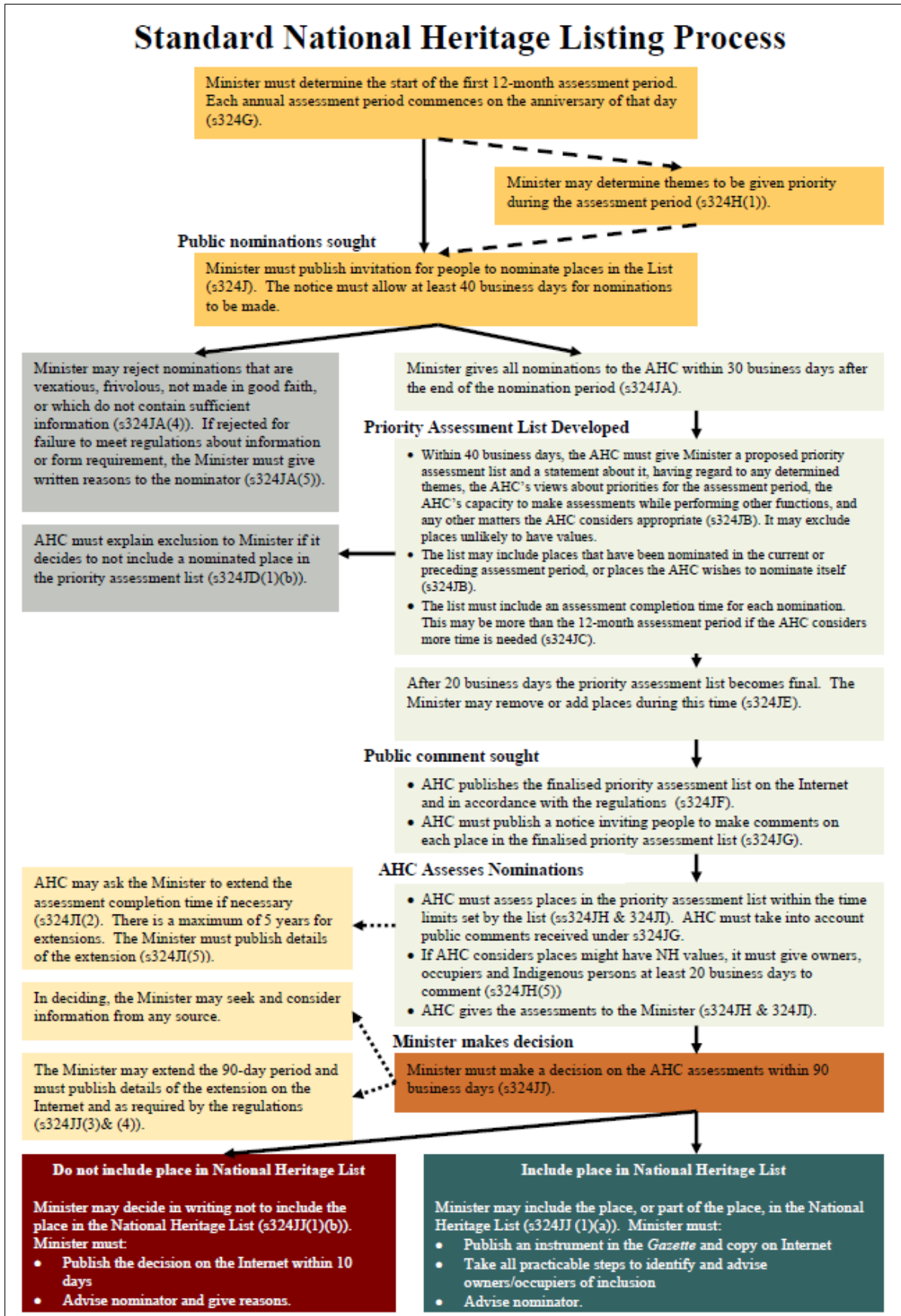
The Nomination Process

SLIDE 3 (NHL Listing Process Flowchart)

The standard heritage nomination process under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) is shown in Figure 1. The process involves a number of steps, some of which have statutory time frames, while others don't.

⁴ A separate nomination for parts of Canberra to be entered in the National Heritage List was also made by Professor Ken Taylor.

Figure1: Standard National Heritage Listing Process



Source: Former Department of the Environment and Heritage.

The process can be summarised as follows:

Commencement

- The Minister determines the start of a 12-month assessment period.
- The Minister determines the theme to be given priority during an assessment period and in doing so may request and have regard to advice from the AHC.

Public Nominations Sought

- The Minister must publish an invitation for people to nominate places to the List that fall within the theme and allow at least 40 business days for nominations to be made.
- The Minister may reject nominations that are considered vexatious, frivolous, not made in good faith, or which do not contain sufficient information and must give reasons for rejecting the nomination.
OR
- The Minister gives all the nominations to the AHC within 30 business days after the end of the nomination period.

Priority Assessment List Developed

- The AHC must within 40 business days give the Minister a proposed priority assessment list and a statement having regard to the determined theme, the AHC's priorities for the assessment period, the AHC's capacity to undertake the assessment. Places unlikely to have heritage values may be excluded by the AHC and its exclusion must be explained to the Minister.
- The priority assessment list may include places that have been nominated in the current or preceding assessment period, or places the AHC wishes to nominate itself. The list must include an assessment completion time for each nomination. This may be more than the 12-month assessment period if the AHC considers more time is required to complete the assessment.
- After 20 business days the priority assessment list becomes final. The Minister may remove or add places during this time.

Public Comment Sought

- Following this process, the AHC must publish the priority assessment list and publish a notice inviting people to make comments on each place in the finalised priority assessment list.

AHC Assesses Nominations

- The AHC must complete the assessment of each place in the priority assessment list within the time limits set by the EPBC Act, taking account of any public comments.
- The AHC may ask the Minister to extend the assessment completion time if necessary and the details of the extension must be published by the Minister.
- If the AHC considers a place might have NHT values, it must give owners, occupiers and Indigenous persons at least 20 days to comment.
- On completion of its assessment, the AHC must give its assessment to the Minister.

Minister makes decision

- The Minister must make a decision on the AHC's assessment within 90 business days.
- At this point in the process, the Minister has the discretion to seek and consider information from any source and to extend the 90-day period, the details of which must be published.
- The Minister may decide to either include the place in the NHL or decide not to include the place in the NHL.
 - If the Minister decides to include the place in the NHL, the Minister must publish an instrument in the Gazette and a copy on the Internet, take all practicable steps to identify and advise the owners/occupiers of its inclusion in the NHL, and advise the nominator.
 - If the Minister decides not to include the place in the NHL, the Minister must publish the decision on the Internet within 10 days and advise the nominator and give reasons for the decision.

The call for nominations under the theme of ‘Australian Democracy’

Section 324C of the EPBC Act requires the Minister to keep a written record of places and their heritage values, called the National Heritage List. The Minister can only make entries to the National Heritage List if the Minister is satisfied that a place has outstanding heritage value to the nation. The criteria for National Heritage Listing are included in **Attachment A**.

Section 324H of the EPBC Act provides for the Minister to determine one or more heritage themes that the Minister considers should be given priority in relation to an assessment period. Under Subsection 324H(2), the Minister may request advice from the Australian Heritage Council (AHC) and have regard to that advice when determining a heritage theme.

SLIDE 4 (Theme Explanatory Statement)

In January 2009 the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Peter Garrett MP, invited nominations for entry on Australia’s National Heritage List under the theme of ‘Australian Democracy’. This theme reflected advice provided to the Minister by the AHC, which considered that key messages associated with the theme included:

- Australia is one of the world’s oldest modern democracies.
- Australia has a robust and enduring democratic government with distinctive political and social institutions.
- The development and recognition of a distinctive Australian identity is characterised by the iconic egalitarian concepts of fair go and mateship.
- Australian democracy acknowledges diverse cultural, political and religious perspectives, and past struggles and victories for fairer conditions and equality.
- Australian democracy reflects core beliefs that Australians stand together, are committed to others, and rely on each other in difficult conditions or adversity.

It was this announcement by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage that prompted a group of us to prepare a nomination for Canberra to be entered on the National Heritage List for its outstanding contribution to Australian democracy through its town planning heritage values.

The group comprised (alphabetically) of the following people: Professor Dianne Firth, Romaldo Giurgola AO, David Headon, Stuart McKenzie, Associate Professor Graham Sansom, Ed Wensing and Greg Wood.

We lodged our nomination for Canberra to be entered in the NHL in March 2009. The details of our nomination were first published by the AHC when they published their Finalised Priority Assessment List for 2009-10.⁵ The details of Professor Ken Taylor’s nomination were also revealed.⁶ The two nominations have very different approaches to the interpretation of the national heritage values of Canberra as a planned city.

The curtilage of our nomination

SLIDE 5 (Page 1 of Nomination)

The challenge confronting those who are interested in protecting Canberra’s unique land planning legacy is to identify the heritage values that exist within Canberra and to define a curtilage. The first step we took was to try and identify what heritage values a place like Canberra might contain. There are several individual places in the

⁵ Canberra and Surrounding Areas, ACT. <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/pubs/priority-assessment-nhl-2009-10.pdf>

⁶ Canberra – Central National Area and Inner Hills, ACT. . <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/pubs/priority-assessment-nhl-2009-10.pdf>

ACT already included on the NHL (the Old Parliament House and curtilage; the High Court-National Gallery precinct; the Australian War Memorial and the memorial parade; the Australian Academy of Science building; and parts of the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves, including Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Brindabella National Park). We see no need to renominate these places.

The other major challenge is to deal with intangible values such as a town plan design and how that design has materialised on the ground. Professor Ken Taylor (2005) claims that Canberra is worthy of inclusion in the World Heritage List. Before this can be achieved, Canberra must first qualify for inclusion in the new National Heritage List and the first issue that arises in any assessment is the area that would be considered worthy of listing.

A place must meet one or more of the nine National Heritage criteria before the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Water can consider a place for inclusion in the National Heritage List. (See **Attachment A** for the Criteria)

Before I turn to the question of values, I will first discuss the curtilage of our nomination.

The curtilage of our nomination is derived from the National Capital Development Commission's 1984 *Metropolitan Policy Plan/Development Plan* as amended up to the end of 1988 and incorporated in the National Capital Plan at the time of self-government for the Territory. It extends to the whole of Metropolitan Canberra but with particular focus on the following elements (for clarity, National Capital Plan terminology is used to describe particular elements):

- All land in the *Designated Areas* as defined in the National Capital Plan (<http://downloads.nationalcapital.gov.au/plan/ncp/seca.pdf>), these include:
 - the *Parliamentary Zone* and *National Triangle*;
 - *Lake Burley Griffin* and its landscaped foreshores;
 - the *Main Avenues and Approach Routes*;
 - *Hills, Ridges and Buffer Spaces* (extending the National Capital Open Space System as a visual backdrop and landscape setting for the National Capital, and defining discrete, decentralised new towns (Woden/Weston, Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin) as proposed in the 1984 Metropolitan Plan) each with its own town centre and preserving the open character of the city by limiting the extent of the existing towns and forming new settlements in the valleys between the main hills and forming a visual backdrop and landscape setting for the National Capital.
- the *River Corridors*, and the *Mountains and Bushlands*;
- Extant elements of the 1918 Griffin Plan and the 1925 Gazetted Plan which have set the framework for Central Canberra, including the avenues, open spaces, structures, axial lines and subdivision geometries (many of which are not covered by the National Capital Plan);
- Early garden suburbs of the Federal Capital Commission, and other prototypical suburbs in Central Canberra by subsequent planning agencies (including the former National Capital Development Commission) up to 1984;
- The building height restrictions in Central Canberra, limiting building heights to below the base of the flag pole on Parliament House at the apex of the National Triangle, to preserve the primacy of major public buildings within a dominant landscape horizon, giving Canberra a distinctive identity as a horizontal city subservient to landscape; and
- The river corridors and landscape views of the Brindabellas that form the backdrop to the city when viewed from the hill tops in the National Capital Open Space System around Central Canberra, and as described by Griffin as forming the backdrop to the 'amphitheatre' of central Canberra, i.e.: 'the purple distant mountain ranges; sun-reflecting, forming the back scene'.

We provided the then Department of the Environment and Heritage with two maps to define the limits of our nomination. The outer limits of our nomination differed significantly from the area nominated by Professor Ken Taylor.

SLIDE 6 (Our first map)

SLIDE 7 (Map of Professor Ken Taylor's nomination)

The first was a map of the whole of the ACT which showed the following inclusions⁷:

- That much of the Australian Alps National Parks that is within the ACT and forms the dominant landscape horizon and backdrop to the city when viewed from Central Canberra and hilltops in the National Capital Open Space System around Central Canberra; and
- That much of the *River Corridors* (as defined by the National Capital Plan) of the Murrumbidgee and Molonglo Rivers (also shown as NUZ4 River Corridor on the Territory Plan).

The second map was a detailed map of Canberra and the immediate environs, which showed the following inclusions:

- All land within the Designated Areas as defined in the National Capital Plan and as shown on the second map but excluding the airport;
- The *Main Avenues and Approach Routes* as depicted in the National Capital Plan and as shown on the second map;
- The National Capital Open Space System and inner hills as shown on the second map capturing the broad scale metropolitan structure (beyond Central Canberra) at the concept level and the principle of discrete and decentralised new towns (Woden/Weston, Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin) each with its own town centre and relatively self-contained services, as proposed in the 1984 Metropolitan Policy Plan Development Plan;
- The whole of Central Canberra (excluding Fyshwick and North Watson) as this area contains extant elements of the 1918 Griffin Plan and the 1925 Gazetted Plan for Canberra, early garden suburbs of the Federal Capital Commission, other prototypical suburbs in Central Canberra planned by subsequent planning agencies (including the former National Capital Development Commission) up to 1984 and gives effect to the significant achievement of Canberra as a designed city in the landscape.

We also provided a list of exclusions, as follows:

1. Within the built environment of Central Canberra: all land outside the public domain that is not within the Designated Areas as defined in the National Capital Plan – i.e. residential and commercial land, buildings and structures outside the avenues, streets, parklands, parkways, key vistas and major public buildings comprising the historic layout of the city. Exceptions include the principles of building height control, setbacks, and no-front-fences which preserve the essential character of Canberra as a city in the landscape; and the early garden suburbs where architectural fabric and streetscapes (i.e. the 'private realm') are important to heritage significance (such as those entered on the ACT heritage list as Canberra's Early Garden City Planned Precincts in Ainslie, Braddon, Reid, Kingston, Barton, Griffith and Forrest).
2. In the New Towns: all the urban areas including buildings, roads, and open spaces which are not part of the continuum of the National Capital Open Space System comprising the *Inner Hills Ridges and Buffer Spaces*.
3. In the Australian Alps National Parks, the same areas excluded from the existing National Heritage Listing.

⁷ National Heritage List Nomination – Canberra and Surrounding Areas Nomination.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/national-assessments/canberra/pubs/surrounding-areas-map.pdf>

The AHC's consideration of our nomination

SLIDE 8 (AHC Notice of 23 June 2009)

In a media release on 8 December 2011, the AHC announced that it was meeting with the ACT Heritage Council to discuss the assessment of Canberra for National Heritage listing. "While the Australian Heritage Council is responsible for carrying out Canberra's national heritage assessment, it is important that the two heritage councils actively engage with each other on this important assessment and build a supportive and productive relationship," the Chairperson of the AHC, Professor Carmen Lawrence, said.⁸ Also in December 2011, the AHC released a Fact Sheet about the nominations for Canberra to be entered in the National Heritage List, advising that during 2012 the AHC will be consulting with owners, occupiers, Indigenous people with rights or interests, business interests and key community and heritage agencies.⁹ The AHC also advised that a Discussion paper would be released during 2012 for public comment.

SLIDE 9(AHC Extension Notice 18 June 2010)

SLIDE 10 (AHC ACT Heritage Council Media Release 8 Dec 2011)

SLIDE 11 (AHC Fact Sheet Dec 2011)

SLIDE 12 (AHC Information Paper June 2012)

SLIDE 13 (Show AHC proposed map – separate slide)

SLIDE 14 (AHC Fact Sheet June 2012)

In early June 2012, the AHC released an Information Paper¹⁰ on the two nominations and invited public comment by the end of the month on the AHC's proposal for listing.

The Information Paper included brief descriptions of the two nominations and their differences, and advised that the 'place' being assessed is "the central national area of Canberra, the Land Axis and Water Axis, Lake Burley Griffin, the layout of the early garden city suburbs as defined in the 1925 Gazetted Plan, the Y-Plan road system and the location of the new towns and the undeveloped inner hills that are reflected in the proposed Canberra national heritage values. The place is not tied to particular buildings, road alignments or town centre layouts and buildings."¹¹ The Information Paper also advised that "Not wishing to duplicate existing national heritage listings in Canberra, only the heritage values of those places relevant to Canberra as a planned city and seat of government are looked at in this assessment.

The Information Paper also advised that proposed National Heritage listing only includes places in public ownership and might include the following:

- the central historic area of Canberra including the Parliamentary Triangle, the land and water axes and Lake Burley Griffin and surrounding parklands
- the surviving street pattern set out in the 1918 Griffin Plan and within the early garden suburbs of the 1925 Gazetted Plan
- the planning concept of the Y-Plan 'new towns' connected by arterial roads and the location of the town centres. (No specific town centre layout, buildings or road alignments are included, nor any residential land at or near town centres)
- the undeveloped inner hills of the national capital open space system. (AHC 2012b:2)¹²

⁸ <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/members/media-releases/pubs/mr20111208.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/national-assessments/canberra/pubs/canberra-assessment-factsheet.pdf>

¹⁰ Australian Heritage Council (2012) Celebrating Canberra: A nation's cultural and democratic landscape. Exploring Canberra's national heritage. <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/national-assessments/canberra/pubs/canberra-info-paper.pdf>

¹¹ Australian Heritage Council (2012) Celebrating Canberra: A nation's cultural and democratic landscape. Exploring Canberra's national heritage. Page 9 <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/national-assessments/canberra/pubs/canberra-info-paper.pdf>

¹² Canberra. The planned national capital; a potential national heritage place. Factsheet. Page 2.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/national-assessments/canberra/pubs/canberra-factsheet-june2012.pdf>

These documents made available by the Australian Heritage Council were only open for comment till the end of June 2012. This was a very small window of opportunity.

Addressing the Theme

What features of Canberra have outstanding heritage value to the nation and warrant being included on the National Heritage List?

I firmly believe that Canberra has outstanding heritage value to the nation for its significance as the seat of Australian democracy and for its seminal contribution to 'A Free and Fair Australia', the heritage theme for 2009. Canberra exemplifies many of the key messages of the 2009 theme, just as it satisfies a number of the criteria for listing on the National Heritage List.

In our view, Canberra as the National Capital meets several of the key messages associated with the theme of Australian democracy – "A Free and Fair Australia".

Australia is one of the world's oldest modern democracies.

In establishing an Australian Commonwealth, the Australian Constitution also created the future certainty of a purpose-built national capital, courtesy of Section 125. Reflecting the wishes of the Australian people and their Constitutional Convention representatives (in 1891 and 1897-8), the Constitution specified that there would be a separate national capital (in NSW, at least one hundred miles from Sydney). Canberra is thus the city that the Federation created-- on the basis of a host of some of the world's most socially progressive ideas, which were enthusiastically debated in the 1890s colonial parliaments and the first federal parliaments at the time. Names such as Henry George, John Stuart Mill, William Morris, Karl Marx and Edward Bellamy were routinely cited in parliamentary discussion concerning the new capital city for the Commonwealth—and some of their ideas exerted a direct influence. One of the best examples of this is Henry George's influence on Canberra's leasehold system of land management. Canberra, through its leasehold system, its street-naming, its national institutions and its history of founding, egalitarian ideas, is the Australian city which best represents our country's noble history of democratic commitment and achievement.

Australia has a robust and enduring democratic government with distinctive political and social institutions.

Australia's democracy is based on the principle of the separation of powers between the three arms of government: the Judiciary (High Court), the Legislature (Parliament) and the Executive (the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Governor-General as the Queen's representative in Australia).¹³ All three arms of government have their headquarters in Canberra: the High Court of Australia is located in the Parliamentary Triangle; the Legislature is located in the new and permanent Parliament House on Capital Hill (not Griffin's preferred location); and the Executive with the Prime Minister's office and the Cabinet located in the rear portion of Parliament House, and the Governor-General's residence located in Yarralumla and adjacent to Scrivener Dam at the head of Lake Burley Griffin. All supporting Federal departments and agencies also have their home base in the capital, along with a number of other Commonwealth political and social institutions including the Parliamentary Departments¹⁴, National Gallery, the National Library, the National Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Australian War Memorial, the National Film and Sound Archive, the National Archives, Questacon, the Australian Institute of Sport, the National Botanic Gardens, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

¹³ Foundations of Governance. <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/archive/publications-archive/foundations-of-governance>

¹⁴ http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments

Islander Studies and a number of other key institutions. The diplomatic missions, numbering over ninety foreign countries, are also sited in Canberra. Each makes its distinctive contribution to the city, the very fabric of which is overtly political, robust and representative. Arguably Canberra's most important role is the symbolic role it plays in engaging the nation.

The development and recognition of a distinctive Australian identity is characterised by the iconic egalitarian concepts of a fair go and mateship.

Canberra literally embodies Australia's distinctive identity through a historic (and legislated) social planning commitment to deliver liveable towns and neighbourhoods, and accessible community facilities, services and open spaces for its residents. This occurred because it was Australia's good fortune, as discussed earlier, to be federating at a notable high point in the history of Western thought. A host of social commentators, pamphleteers, novelists and thinkers were intensely engaged in promoting a progressive, even utopian social and cultural agenda. Inevitably, this impacted on the politicians entrusted with founding the new nation. Many of them took a particular interest in the intellectual and moral climate of the era—especially the emergent Labor Party politicians who were determined to create a more equal society based specifically on 'egalitarian concepts of a fair go and mateship'. Historians such as Russel Ward have rightly referred to this determined commitment as the prime element in the 'Legend of the Nineties'. At the end of the Nineties, Australia established its Commonwealth, and shortly after a capital based on high democratic principles.

Australian democracy acknowledges diverse cultural, political and religious perspectives, and past struggles and victories for fairer conditions and equality.

Canberra is the symbolic, representative home of: Australia's diverse cultural, political and religious perspectives; its past struggles and victories for fairer conditions and greater social equality, which saw Australia earn the reputation, in the early decades of the twentieth century, as 'the social laboratory of the world'; a uniquely significant nomenclature of places, streets and suburbs according to a grid of particular national themes, with a noble, informed history dating back to the FCAC's nomenclature scheme in 1921-4; and most of Australia's national 'treasure-house' institutions. Australia's most enduring and engaging conversations—on national subjects such as reconciliation, the republic and climate change—take place in the national capital.

Australian democracy reflects core beliefs that Australians stand together, are committed to others, and rely on each other in difficult conditions or adversity.

Canberra possesses the largest and most symbolic commemorative vista in Australia – the Land Axis, including Anzac Parade and Federation Mall – linking the Parliament House to the Australian War Memorial, symbolising the sacrifice and valour of Australians for freedom, democracy and the Australian way of life. Many locations in Canberra have increasingly assumed a representative (sometimes sacred) significance, including Federation Mall, Reconciliation Place, Commonwealth Place, the Magna Carta Memorial, the Police Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial, the Korean Memorial and the Emergency Services Memorial. Canberra gives Australia's citizens an opportunity to register, commemorate and celebrate their shared beliefs, mores and aspirations through creative use of the city's public spaces.

Identifying the National Heritage Values

SLIDE 15 (NHL Criteria)

A copy of the criteria for National Heritage Listing in the EPBC Act and relevant regulations are included in **Attachment A**.

SLIDE 16 (Canberra's NH Values)

In submitting our nomination, we had to specify one or more criteria for listing that we thought Canberra best meets. In our nomination, we provided sufficient details to show that Canberra meets all of the criteria. But it particularly meets **Criteria A, D, F and G**, as follows:

A. The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history.

The Australian Constitution adopted by the Australian people included at Section 125 the clear wish that the new Australian nation have a distinct, separate, national capital. Their wish was that the capital should reflect the ideals, aspirations, and ultimately, the achievements of the Australian people and the Australian nation. Following protracted conjecture as to the site, an international competition was held with the aim of securing an outstanding city design, an ideal city to capture the admiration of the world. Canberra today is the outcome of that liberated process and of a subsequent century of growth and achievement, built on lively, informed, debate. The ebb and flow of political interest, interrupted by momentous world events, has been embedded in the present planning structure. Particular historic values may be demonstrated through:

- The reflection of the wishes of the Australian people to have a national capital;
- Visionary planning for a new capital city – including Griffin's plan;
- Long-term town planning during the profession's embryonic years in Australia.
- An exemplar of revolutionary social justice principles in the layout of public and private urban land.

The layering of the plans and designs for Canberra are part of its significance as an expression of the quality of the work and its implementation.

Additional characteristics that meet this criterion include:

1. Canberra is a tangible emblem of Federation, explicitly designed to reflect the ideals of Australian democracy and unification.
2. Canberra provides a statement of Australia's commitment to excellence in the building and design professions, including city planning, architecture, engineering and landscape architecture.
3. Canberra represents an outstanding achievement in progressive [Hugh Stretton claims 'revolutionary'] social justice, related to the democratic distribution and occupation of urban land for the public benefit and well-being of the community.
4. Canberra conceived as a national showplace, embodying the spirit of Australian idealism at the birth of Federation and opening decades of the twentieth century, in its monumental buildings, memorials and museums, and its grandly conceived landscape spaces and sweeping vistas, and the liveability of its early garden suburbs.¹⁵
5. Canberra as a focal place for memorials and cultural collections-- place names mark significant events, people and places in the nation's history; the layout of the plan provides a symbolic framework for reflecting the 'ideals, sentiments and achievements' of the Australian people; and the prominent central places in Griffin's four federal groups – *government, education, military* and (cultural) *recreation* – displaying a compelling higher order of 'deliberative' functions of national life and decision-making.
6. Canberra's selection of an inspiring site considered, at the opening of the 20th century, to be representative of a quintessential Australian landscape identity at a time in history that was pastoral, salubrious and picturesque.

¹⁵ These words which have been adapted from the Introduction in the Michelin Washington DC Tourist Guide could equally fit Canberra; and are quoted here in full: '*Conceived as a national showplace, Washington, DC embodies the spirit of American idealism in its Neoclassical monuments, its grand museums and its sweeping vistas. As the city is remarkably accessible, opening the doors of Congress, the White House and several other federal institutions to hosts of visitors who come to witness democracy in progress. Though long considered a cultural backwater, the capital has gradually shed that image to emerge as a truly international city, with a world class performing arts complex, fine restaurants and shops and mixed population of foreign nationals. Gracious in appearance, steeped in national history and rich in cultural offerings, Washington DC is unique among American cities.*'

7. The city's original plan is the product of a seminal international design competition that called for competitors to 'embody in their designs all recent developments in the science of town planning'. The winning scheme by Walter Burley Griffin (with assistance from Marion Mahony Griffin), reflected the most progressive ideas in town planning and was committed to building the capital accordingly.
8. Canberra is the first city plan in the world to be designed wholly by a 'landscape architect', a new profession, a brilliant synthesis of traditional and modern landscape design elements applied at an unprecedented scale.
9. Canberra is the first city in the world to be designed as part of a national park (or 'Federal Park' as Griffin called it), utilising extensive 'preserves of nature' for beauty, recreation and as an emblematic landscape backdrop for projecting images of 'national' identity, within and surrounding the city, which underlies the idea of Australia's 'bush capital'. These bush reserves, parks and arboreta, set aside as inalienable open space since the city's inception, are extremely intact; they have been designed and managed to a level comparable to a national park and integrated with the city environs for almost a century.

D. The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:

- i. a class of Australia's natural or cultural places, or
- ii. a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments.

There is only one capital city of any nation state. While all capital cities can claim to be unique in a national sense, Canberra as an example of a twentieth century capital is one of a select few purpose-built and planned national capitals. Canberra is also unique because it is the centre of diplomatic activity, and many national cultural, political and institutional headquarters are a feature of its landscape. As the political centre of the nation, Canberra is also a place for witnessing democracy in action, and public demonstration and freedom of expression. The lawns in front of Old Parliament House have been the site of many protests, the most prominent example being the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

Representational values may be demonstrated by Canberra being home to a number of national institutions, especially in the Central National Area, and the place for many diplomatic missions and enclaves.

Canberra demonstrates the principal characteristics of being:

1. One of a class of national capitals specifically designed for its primary purpose.
2. One of a class of planned world cities.
3. One of the rarest cities in the English speaking democracies where public land ownership (leasehold) was used to enable coordinated planning and land revenue outcomes.
4. One of a very small class of cities in an urban landscape carefully created and managed since the city's inception 100 years ago, including some of the nation's earliest large scale conservation and reforestation projects in both an urban and non-urban context; creation of an 'urban national park', originally called 'Federal Park', which has evolved to become the National Capital Open Space System.

F. The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

Canberra's creative and technical achievement spans many periods-- for example, the 1911-12 design competition, Griffin's modified plan of 1918, the NCDC's Canberra Outline Plan of 1965, the Y Plan of 1969 and the Metropolitan Policy/Development Plan of 1984. The technical achievements of a co-ordinated approach to city planning and development under the direction of the NCDC from 1957 to 1989, particularly during the period 1958-1975, are of considerable significance in planning history terms. Technical achievement in the planning for Canberra may be demonstrated by:

- The extant structure of the Griffin plan for the central area and the inner urban areas.

- The Y Plan structure and the decentralised town centres and sub-regional centres.
- The landscape setting and use of natural landscape elements to emphasise the dispersed town centres and linear urban structure.
- The hierarchical road system.

Additional characteristics that meet this criterion include:

1. Canberra is internationally renowned for design excellence – 'a treasure of the urban world' ...'will soon rank with Washington' ...etc.
2. More than 6 million trees planted in the first fifty years (Pryor, 1962), and many more during Canberra's high growth period from the 1960s to the 1980s; for its time, Canberra represents an unprecedented urban afforestation project in Australia and (probably) the world.
3. Central Canberra (the Griffin Plan) is laid out on a farsighted plan for a rapid transit network (yet to be fully realised), with wide tree-lined avenues and parkways with capacity for trams, vehicles and pedestrians, generally located within 400 metres (five minutes walk) of homes; and capable of being converted to an underground metro with the growth of the city. A rare example of a comprehensive plan for rapid transit from the heyday of trams.

G. The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

The residents of Canberra recognise the exceptional nature of the city and its 'liveability'. Canberra also has significance as a model for design and building professionals as the location for some of the most adventurous architectural design solutions in Australia. More detailed investigation is required of the special meaning that Canberra has to a number of the design professions and students in planning, architecture, landscape architecture and to the 'Garden City' movement'. As Peter Hall, an eminent planner from the United Kingdom notes, Canberra ranks as one of the World's great monumental capitals, and is "an eloquent testimony to the wisdom of making haste slowly... Canberra achieves the difficult feat of being one of the last cities beautiful. And also the World's biggest Garden City." (Hall 1988:196).

As the political centre of the nation, Canberra is also significant as a place of public demonstration. Its associational value may be demonstrated by special association for political demonstrations.

Canberra has special meaning to a number of the design professions – planners, architects, landscape architects, especially for students, and to the 'Garden City Movement'. The plans and articles associated with the respective agencies such as the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, the Federal Capital Commission and the National Capital Development Commission are exceptional examples of planning design that demonstrate the skills and expertise of the agencies and the various design and construction professionals (planning, surveying, architecture, engineering, landscape architecture and building).

Distinct Planning Layers and Legacies

SLIDE 17 (Distinct Planning Layers)

Canberra's overall integrity as a pre-eminent capital 'city in the landscape' can only be effectively measured by examining the three distinct legacies left by the various planning layers that have accumulated over time, and the distinct stages of Parliamentary commitment that have occurred over the past one hundred years.

The *first* legacy period (1890-1921) must itself be divided into two periods: the pre-Griffin period from 1890 to 1912, the year of the announcement of the winners of the International Design Competition for Canberra, and the Griffin period from 1913 to 1921. The pre-Griffin period includes: the Constitutional Convention debates in the 1890s about the need for a national capital for a new nation; the 'Battle of the Sites', the prolonged and

exhaustive search for the best and most inspiring site for the new capital; the Charles Scrivener survey of the Canberra site, which produced the topographic map forwarded to all the entrants in the design competition; and the intense controversy surrounding the competition itself (see Reys, 1997). These are the decades when the practical and philosophical groundwork was laid for the planning, design and implementation for a model city which Walter Burley Griffin famously suggested would be 'an ideal city' for a nation of 'bold democrats'.

The Griffin period, from 1913 to 1921, entails those years when Walter Burley Griffin was employed by the Commonwealth as the Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction. Special attention is also to be given to Marion Mahoney Griffin, Griffin's professional partner and wife, who though not officially registered with the winning entry, is widely believed to be a contributor to both her husband's success and the quality of the final design. This period is best represented by Griffin's plan of 1918, the last Plan he signed and approved. Specific design aspects of Griffin's legacy include the land and water axes, parts of Lake Burley Griffin, the structure of main avenues and some of the road patterns in the inner areas, and the masterly integration of topography and landscape into the overall plan. Examples include ANZAC Parade, Commonwealth and Kings Avenues, and Constitution Avenue.

The **second** legacy comprises the work carried out, from 1921 to 1949, by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, the Federal Capital Commission and the National Capital Planning and Development Committee—including the suburban areas of inner Canberra with their treed streetscapes, as well as some individual elements of the built fabric such as Old Parliament House, East and West Blocks, the Administration Building, the Australian War Memorial, the Sydney and Melbourne Buildings, School of Anatomy, Hotel Acton and Beauchamp House. This period is characterised by the 1925 gazetted Plan of Layout, derived from the 1918 Griffin plan. While Griffin's name and reputation fell from favour in the inter-war period (see Headon 2003), the Plan of Layout remained the framework for Canberra's development for some fifty to sixty years. Gazetting of the Plan of Layout meant that any variations to the plan had to be scrutinised by a Joint Committee of both houses of Parliament, and this remained the case from 1925 through to the late 1980s, when the ACT was granted self-government.

The **third** legacy spans the period from 1950 to 1988—a legacy with its firm foundations in the monumental Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Inquire into and Report upon the Development of Canberra (1955). The Senate Select Committee asserted the need to re-commit to the design of Griffin-- 'The more one studies Griffin's plan and his explanatory statements, the more obvious it is that departures from his main principles should not be lightly countenanced'—and it unequivocally endorsed the sentiments of the President of the Australian Planning Institute, who described the Griffin's scheme as 'a grand plan'.

In response to the Senate Report, the Australian Government established the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) in 1957-8. This was the Menzies/Holford/NCDC era. Prominent British planner, Sir William Holford, was commissioned by the Commonwealth in 1957 to report on Canberra's development. His report recommended that the 'Garden City' concept be retained, that an improved traffic system needed to be developed, and reinforced the idea that Canberra should be developed as a cultural centre (Holford 1958). The Commonwealth tasked the NCDC to report on Holford's report. The period encompassed: the completion in 1963 of Lake Burley Griffin and the surrounding parklands; the design and development of the three discrete new towns of Woden-Weston Creek, Belconnen and Tuggeranong (and Gungahlin 'conceptually' in the NCDC's metropolitan plans-- its construction did not commence until after the NCDC was abolished); the network of open spaces between the towns known as the National Capital Open Space System (Seddon 1977; & National Capital Plan 8. National Capital Open Space System); the peripheral road hierarchy and parkway network; and the major government, cultural and administrative facilities in the Parliamentary Zone, not the least of which is Parliament House itself. Given the many decades of delay that Canberra had already experienced, Prime Minister Robert Menzies recognised the need to ensure that the NCDC reported to the Parliament and operated within the span of his own authority (Troy 1993:8). In his first Prime Ministership (1939-41) Menzies was

someone who, by his own admission, hated Canberra. In his second Prime Ministership, however, he became an unashamed 'apostle' and advocate for the city, and is reported as saying that "Canberra is my pride and joy ...it will continue beyond question" (The Canberra Times 1989).

In October 1992, a Commonwealth Parliamentary 'Joint Committee on the National Capital', in a report titled: 'Our Bush Capital – Protecting and Managing the National Capital's Open Spaces' recommended that: 'The Commonwealth and ACT governments explore the possibility that the parts of Canberra designed by Walter and Marion Burley Griffin (sic) and the surrounding hills and open spaces be included in the indicative list of possible Australian World Heritage Sites.'

Significant Features

SLIDE 18 (Significant Features)

The significant features of Canberra's fabric thus include:

- The National Triangle and Parliamentary Zone, with the Land Axis vista stretching between Parliament House and the Australian War Memorial against the backdrop of Mount Ainslie;
- Parliament House, The High Court of Australia, the Governor-General's residence in Yarralumla;
- Lake Burley Griffin and its landscaped foreshores;
- The main approach roads and grand tree-lined avenues identified in Griffin's plan;
- The National Capital Open Space System including Hills, Rivers and Buffer Spaces, the River Corridors, and the Mountains and Bushlands; forming a continuum of natural and park-like settings, preserving a visual and symbolic backdrop for the National Capital, reinforcing the natural, cultural, scenic and recreational values of the ACT (National Capital Plan: 8. National Capital Open Space System Principles and Policies).
- The broad structure principle of new towns (Woden/Weston, Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin) each with its own town centre and self contained services, as proposed in the 1984 Metropolitan Plan; preserving the open character of the city by limiting the extent of the existing districts and forming new settlements in the valleys between the main hills; extending the National Capital Open Space System as a visual backdrop and landscape setting for the National Capital, reinforcing the natural, cultural, scenic and recreational values of the ACT (refer National Capital Plan: 8. National Capital Open Space System Principles and Policies).
- Extant elements of the 1918 Griffin Plan and the 1925 Gazetted Plan which have set the framework for Central Canberra, including the avenues, open spaces, structures, axial lines and subdivision geometries (many of which are not covered by the National Capital Plan);
- Early garden suburbs of the FCAC and FCC, and other prototypical suburbs in Central Canberra by subsequent planning agencies up to 1984;
- The broad scale metropolitan structure (beyond Central Canberra) based on the principle of discrete and decentralised new towns (Woden/Weston, Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin) each with its own town centre and relatively self-contained services, as proposed in the 1984 Metropolitan Plan; with particular emphasis on preserving the open character of the city by limiting the extent of the existing districts and forming new settlements in the valleys between the main hills; extending the National Capital Open Space System as a visual backdrop and landscape setting for the National Capital;
- The building height restrictions in Central Canberra, limiting building heights to below the base of the flag pole on Parliament House at the apex of the Parliamentary Triangle, to preserve the primacy of the major public buildings and a dominant landscape horizon, and giving Canberra a distinct identity as a horizontal city subservient to the landscape;
- The peripheral parkways dispersing the peak traffic around the new towns, in scenic landscape corridors, rather than through the urban neighbourhoods; and

- The river corridors and landscape views of the Brindabellas that form the backdrop—or in Griffin’s words, the ‘amphitheatre’-- to the city when viewed from the hill tops in the National Capital Open Space System around Central Canberra.

Our nomination called for all of these features to be included in the listing.

SLIDE 19 (Five Key Documents)

In making a decision to enter Canberra or parts thereof in the National Heritage List, we also urged the inclusion of at least five key documents:

- Griffin’s 1912 Plan and accompanying Report Explanatory.
- Griffin’s 1918 amended plan for Canberra.
- The Future Canberra – Canberra Outline Plan 1965.
- Tomorrow’s Canberra, the ‘Y’ Plan 1970.
- The Metropolitan Canberra Policy Plan/Development Plan 1984.

These five plans and accompanying documents are already held by the National Archives of Australia.

Conclusion

This paper briefly summarised the scope of our nomination for significant parts of Canberra to be included in the National Heritage List for its outstanding heritage values in relation to Australian democracy and for its planning history.

There are many people long before the seven of us prepared this nomination, who have made significant statements on the planning principles and foundations of Canberra’s planning and development. The following are just a small selection.

1908

On 21 December 1908, the then Minister for Home Affairs, Hugh Mahon, instructed the NSW district surveyor, Charles Scrivener, when conducting his survey of sites for the national capital that the site must possess certain essential topographical characteristics for the Federal Capital and that:
“the Surveyor will bear in mind that the Federal Capital should be a beautiful city, occupying a commanding position, with extensive views, and embracing distinctive features which lend themselves to the evolution of a design worthy of the object, not for the present, but for all time, consequently the potentialities of the site will demand most careful consideration from a scenic standpoint, with a view to securing picturesqueness, and also with the object of beautification and expansion.” (Mahon 21 December 1908, cited in the Senate Committee Report 1955:87)

1909

“A city could be located at Canberra that would be visible on approach for many miles; streets with easy gradients would be readily designed, while prominent hills of moderate altitude present suitable sites for the principal public buildings. The capital would probably lie in an amphitheatre of hills with an outlook towards the north and north-west, well sheltered from both the southerly and westerly winds, and in the immediate vicinity of the capital there are large areas of gently undulating country...” (Scrivener, 1909, cited in the Senate Select Committee Report 1955:13)

1913

“Taken together, the site may be considered as an irregular amphitheatre – with Ainslie at the northeast in the rear, flanked on either side by Black Mountain and Mount Pleasant, all forming together the top galleries; with the slopes to the water, the auditorium, with the waterway and flood basin, the terraced stage and setting of monumental Government structures sharply defined, rising tier on tier to the culminating highest internal forested hill of the Capitol; and the Mugga Mugga, Red Hill, and the blue

distant mountain ranges, sun reflecting, forming the back scene of the theatrical whole" (Griffin 1913, cited in Griffin 2008:50).

"...Australia has, in fact, so well learned some of the lessons taught through modern civilization, as seen in broad perspective from her isolated vantage point, that we may be justified in believing that she will fully express the possibilities for individual freedom, comfort and convenience for public spirit, wealth and splendour of the great democratic city ideal for which her capital offers the best opportunity so far". (Griffin 1913, cited in Griffin 2008:70)

1955

"Griffin's Plan of 1912 won the international competition [for the design of the 'Federal Capital City' of Australia] because it embodies, above all others, a central idea of the new nation. The idea was derived from a ...deep sympathy with the national and aesthetic aspirations of the founders of the Commonwealth...half a century of planning experience since can add nothing to its quality." (Australian Planning Institute 1955)

1995

"It is the conscious use of space as a design element which has given Canberra a most distinctive character unlike, as Griffin said, any other city in the world." (Harrison 1995:30).

2002

"Australians in general and planners of Canberra in particular are custodians of an idea for a city of worldwide significance." (Reid 2002, cited in Headon 2003:167)

There are also many people long before us, who over the years have praised the merits of planning this wonderful city. The following is just a selection.

1912

"I have planned a city not like any other city in the world. I have planned it not in a way that I expected any government authorities in the world would accept. I have planned an ideal city – a city that meets my ideals of the city of the future." (Griffin 1912).

1955

"[The central area of Canberra is] ...a dramatic essay in civic design which alone distinguishes the Canberra Plan and places it in the first rank of world capitals, a brilliant combination of mountains and lake, axis and avenue, to form a noble composition. It embodies the heart, the brain and the spirit of the Nation, the most important area of land in the 3,000,000 square miles of the Commonwealth." (Peter Harrison, Australian Planning Institute 1955)

1967

"Many examples of civic design in this book [The Design of Cities] were done during periods in history in which autocratic rulers wielded immense personal power. Lest we conclude that this is a prerequisite for great and powerful work, we turn our attention to the conditions which surrounded the development of the capital of the newest of the great nations, Australia's Canberra. Here flourished and continues to flourish one of the greatest urban designs ever produced, conceived, nurtured, and grown in circumstances fiercely democratic. Yet so strong was the original concept of American architect Walter Burley Griffin...that the integrity of the plan survives and reasserts its relevance to the modern day. This is a plan of firm, clear geometry not imposed rigidly on the terrain but sensitively adjusted to its inherent vagaries. Here is a plan that continues to work in spite of enormous changes in the technology of transportation, a system of design that is capable of infinite extension." (Bacon 1967, rev. ed. 1974)

1968

"The great accomplishment of Walter Burley Griffin, and of the Australian nation which selected, and up to now has supported the Griffin plan, was the capacity to conceive space itself as the basic design issue... Now that you have produced such a masterwork, the great issue is that you don't wreck it." (Bacon, 1968).

1990

"[Canberra] is all exceedingly grand, dignified, elegant, yet ... reposeful; It will soon rank with Washington as one of the World's great monumental capitals, an eloquent testimony to the wisdom of making haste slowly... Canberra achieves the difficult feat of being one of the last cities beautiful, and also the World's biggest Garden City. It is even, in its way, one of the few extant realisations of Ebenezer Howard's polycentric social city: no small achievement for a city that for a long time never looked like growing up. Thus, unlike a number of other examples of the City Beautiful genre, it manages to be rather likeable." (Hall 1990:196).

SLIDE 20 (a final word from John Reps)

1997

"Griffin himself recognised that his competition design was far from flawless, and he made many significant changes in it as early as 1913. ...Modest in size and altered in many respects from Griffin's vision, it remains an extraordinary achievement deserving recognition and protection as one of the treasures, not only of Australia, but of the entire urban world." (Reps 1997:267)

We look forward to seeing significant parts of Canberra being entered on the National Heritage List. The delay in doing so is inexplicable.

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ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION REGULATIONS 2000
REG 10.01A

National Heritage criteria (Act s.324D)

- (1) For section 324D of the Act, sub-regulation (2) prescribes the National Heritage criteria for the following:
- (a) natural heritage values of places;
 - (b) indigenous heritage values of places;
 - (c) historic heritage values of places.
- (2) The National Heritage criteria for a place are any or all of the following:
- (a) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history;
 - (b) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia's natural or cultural history;
 - (c) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history;
 - (d) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:
 - (i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or
 - (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments;
 - (e) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;
 - (f) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;
 - (g) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;
 - (h) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's natural or cultural history;
 - (i) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance as part of indigenous tradition.
- (3) For sub-regulation (2), the *cultural* aspect of a criterion means the indigenous cultural aspect, the non-indigenous cultural aspect, or both.